

## REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In the Torah portion of Va'eira we read about the first seven plagues inflicted on Egypt. The purpose of the plagues was not only to punish the Egyptians, but to deflate their egos and eradicate their false notions about G-dliness. The plagues also served as the blows that freed from the constraints and limitations of Egypt.

Every story in the Torah teaches us how to become better in our G-dly service. Let's see what we can learn from the first two plagues, blood and frogs.

In Egypt they worshiped the Nile River. So to break their pride in the Nile, the first plague hit the waters of the Nile, turning the water into blood. Water is by nature wet and cold. This was the way of the Egyptians to be cold or apathetic to G-dliness and holiness. The Nile was turned into blood, which is warm and full of life.

The opposite of holiness is coldness, apathy, because holiness is warm and full of life. When we are cold and apathetic to G-dliness and holiness, it opens the door to everything that is unholy, and we are stuck in an Egypt. How do we break out of apathy towards holiness?

Through understanding the second plague.

Egypt had a great fervor and passion for everything unholy. Meaning that there is also an unholy warmth, when someone has a passion for impermissible physical pleasures.

To cool off their passion, G-d sent the second plague, frogs. The frogs went everywhere, even in the ovens, and our Sages learn from them the idea of self-sacrifice.

What is the meaning of the frogs going into the ovens? Ovens, which are hot, symbolize the heat and passion for the physical. Frogs are from the water, cold and wet, but at the same time, they did G-d's will, to the extent that they went totally against their nature. The cold water creatures went into the fiery ovens and cooled them off. In other words, there is also a holy coldness, when one fosters a coldness towards the physical and the unholy.

The frogs came to deflate Pharaoh's ego. They went into the ovens cooling off the passion and the false importance of the unholy that existed in Egypt.

Holy fire breaks you free from unholy coldness, and holy coldness breaks you free from passion for the unholy.

To break free from a spiritual Egypt, one must first take a lesson from the blood and bring life and warmth into holy matters, because the beginning of all kinds of evil comes from coldness.

It is a mistake to think that just positive action is enough. If you don't bring warmth and passion into holiness, ultimately you will end up in the unholy.

Just as we need to bring a warmth and life into holiness - blood, so too we should foster coldness towards the unholy - frogs.

May we all be filled with warmth and holiness, breaking free from our personal Egypts and ultimately breaking free from this final exile with the coming of Moshiach. May he come now!

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.

### Why a Mezuzah Is Not a Mezuzah

By Baruch Epstein

There is a mezuzah on the entry to the White House and your avowed atheist neighbor has one that all the neighborhood can see!

I'll explain. The word "mezuzah" means doorpost. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read: "And you shall write them on the doorposts (mezuzot) of your homes and your gates." So, if we're to be linguistic nit-pickers, the scroll is affixed to the mezuzah; it is not the mezuzah itself.

Okay, so beyond my trite witticism (my mother thinks I'm clever), what do we learn from the vernacular use of an architectural term to refer to a ritual object?

Chassidism emphasizes that G-d has a plan—a passionate, inexplicable, irreplaceable desire that this world, warts and all, be transformed into a welcoming home for Him. That's why He created it. All of creation exists only to exhibit G-d. Humans tend to see it in reverse; we think of ourselves and our world as primary and then look to see where and if G-d fits into the picture. The reverse is true; G-d is, and we are here to prove it.

Like hidden treasure, divinity is just below the surface, waiting for us to expose it through a mitzvah. Every time we use a physical resource for something G-dly, we illustrate its true character: a tool for us to discover the holy spark buried within.

It's a pretty clever idea (I hope G-d doesn't mind my compliment). Divinity, while exciting, often seems too spiritual for nine-to-five people like us to grasp. When presented with it, we just gawk in awe. Materiality, on the other hand, we get. So G-d embeds Himself in physical objects, and when we use them according to His instructions, we find Him. Like a metaphor, it makes the abstract tangible.

So maybe we have it right. Maybe the genuine meaning of mezuzah is the mitzvah scroll, and the doorpost is only called a mezuzah to emphasize that its existence is realized, not by holding the door in place, but by enabling a mitzvah. If not for the scrolls, there would be no reason for plain old doorposts.

And so it goes with all things; there are two perspectives: 1) I am, so when I earn money, I buy what I need, and then, if there is any left over, I'll give to charity. Or, 2) G-d is, and He has embedded Himself in cash as a way for me to discover Him. When I earn money, I first give one-tenth to charity and then use the remaining, now uplifted money for my own needs.

Don't view the mezuzah as an appendage to your house, see your house as a mezuzah holder. Don't just read this article, call your local Chabad center and get yourself, or someone you know, a mezuzah for their mezuzah.

# SLICE OF

Hardware Store Owner Dropped It All to Go to Israel



Ariel Pinson putting on Tefillin with an IDF soldier

After what happened on the 7th of October, each of us found our own way to connect and show solidarity. In this ongoing war in Israel, we all have a role to play, everyone in our own unique way, from wherever we may be. Some people contribute from home through various initiatives, while others feel the call to dive into the frontlines — with soldiers, aiding the displaced, or lending a hand to farmers in need.

Recently, Ariel Pinson, owner of Weinstein's Hardware & Houseware in the Crown Heights neighborhood in Brooklyn, stepped up in a big way. Fueled by the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the desire to help his brothers and sisters in the holy land, he jetted off to Israel.

With blessings from his wife and business partner, he spent weeks with soldiers – helping them put on Tefillin, giving Tzedakah, writing letters in a Sefer Torah, and encouraging women to light Shabbat candles.

Once in Israel, Pinson got a wonderful inspirational surprise – his friend Meir Zarchi and his son Mendel joined the mission. Together, they hopped on a Mitzvah Tank

which went to the Gaza border where they did all they could to inspire soldiers. From putting up Mezuzahs on a base, to supplying the soldiers with food and giving the soldiers pocket-sized Chitas on a microfilm for protection.

Their impact was real – soldiers, with tears in their eyes, expressed gratitude and a willingness to fulfill Mitzvos. Stories unfolded, like a 40-year-old reservist who hadn't put on Tefillin since his Bar Mitzvah, and another who had never put on Tefillin in his life. Soldiers were so touched that they were eager to don Tefillin, Tzitzis, and do other mitzvos.

One story hit home – they left a pair of Tzitzis with a soldier, and later found out that it was gifted to a soldier who was hesitant to go into dangerous areas within the red zone to make arrests, without them. With tears in his eyes, he put on his own pair of Tzitzis and confidently headed into Gaza.

Pinson and the Zarchis weren't just there to give strength; they found it too. Their visit to the community of Sderot, a community which over the years got hit hard by over 20,000 rockets, was particularly inspiring.

"We met with the local Chabad Shliach where we had the opportunity to help with a food bank that supplied those that don't have the means," Pinson said. "Local community members from Sderot pointed out how miraculous and fortunate that the tragedy didn't happen a day before — when plenty of men would have been sleeping in the Sukkah at that time."

He added, "One would think that at a time like this, people would be caught up in their own problems, and figuring out their own situations for their families. But the overwhelming sense of unity, and positive energy was next level.

"One example that sticks out, was of a women and her daughter that approached us on shabbos afternoon in Yerushalayim, the mother asked if we could help them, we replied of course, they went on to ask if we



At the Rebbe's Ohel, praying for a successful trip

knew of a Shul in the area, so that her daughter could say Tehilim-Psalms. Very quickly we found out that her family was displaced due to the attacks, and people that they didn't know opened their homes and

took them in, and this displaced little girl is looking for a Tehillim so that she could pray for others in need!

"As the trip came to a close and we we're about to board the plane to head back home, the lady at the gate asked, what we were doing in Israel at a time like this. After explaining and showing her some videos of our trip, we saw that she became very emotional and was crying. The lady expressed her gratitude and appreciation for what we have done, and with these heavy emotions we boarded the plane, knowing that we just had the ultimate once in a lifetime experience, that was full of the Rebbe's blessings, and incredible divine providence from beginning to end.

"The point here is simple – there's no doubt in my mind that everyone can make a difference," Pinson adds. "Let's all realize how helpful we can be and continue our support for Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael, where we will all be there together, with a complete victory over this exile with the coming of Moshiach Now!"

Many have been reaching out to Pinson to ask about volunteering themselves, including a group of women who are over 50 and an elderly man who said he had volunteered during the Yom Kippur war.

If you're thinking about a special trip and need guidance, Ariel Pinson has already helped quite a few groups already and is more than happy to connect you with the right contacts. He can be reached at Kosherhouseware@yahoo.com

#### IDF Base at Gaza Border Hosts Writing of a New Torah



Initiating the writing of a Torah scroll at a military base near the Gaza Strip amidst intense combat is not an everyday occurrence. The soldiers of Division 162, the Nahal Brigade, and the Steel Strength Commando Brigade had the unique privilege of partaking in such

an event, fostering a deep sense of unity among them. The event was organized by the volunteers of Kfar Chabad – Ezer LaChayal, headed by Rabbi Eliyahu Gutman, together with the Chabad House for Russian speakers in Rishon Lezion, directed by Rabbi Alex Prochensk.

The Torah's writing began with Brigadier General Itzik Cohen, the commander of the steel formation. He desired to pen a letter to honor his subordinates, who bravely risked their lives in the combat in Gaza. The guest of honor at the event was the Rabbi of Safed Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahuv who spoke of the special directive of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's to write a letter for each soldier, which would instill a sense of spiritual protection and safety among the soldiers.

### All Together

#### What are the customs of a Yahrtzeit?

The Yiddish word "Yahrtzeit" means "time of year." It commonly refers to the yearly anniversary of the passing of a person. It is customary on the Yahrtzeit of certain close relatives to light a candle that will burn for the entire 24 hours of the day, as well as to study Torah, give extra charity, visit the cemetery, and recite Kaddish. All of these customs have the common goal of bringing an elevation to the soul of the person who passed on as well as comfort to those left behind.

### The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

#### Continuation of a Letter Written in 1973

I am impelled to add yet another essential point. The survival of our Jewish people, and the impact that this matter has upon every Jewish individual, is not something that has as yet to be investigated and experimented with. The Jewish people is one of the oldest in the world, and in its long history as a nation it has gone through various conditions and circumstances, mostly very unfavorable, as mentioned above. If one wishes to know the secret of Jewish survival under circumstances that have obliterated larger and stronger nations, one has but to apply the same scientific method as in other cases.

In other words, it is necessary to find the common factor, or factors, in all the various periods of Jewish history, which would then have to be taken as the basis of Jewish survival. Should two or three different factors be found, there would be a question of whether all of them were indispensable to survival, or perhaps only one or two would also have been sufficient. But if only one common factor is found, then there can be no doubt that this is the only basis of the survival. This, as mentioned above, is the scientific approach, and is not a matter of belief or faith. Moreover, as in all fields of science, it does not matter whether one does or does not understand the scientific findings. Indeed, in most exact sciences the facts and actual phenomenon are first ascertained, and then a scientific explanation is sought.

Now, going back to the long history of our Jewish people over a period of some 3500 years, it will be seen that there has been only one factor that has preserved Jewish identity and survival throughout the various periods of our history. This factor was not language, nor country, nor anything else which is often associated with nationhood and nationalism, for in all these things there have been radical changes from one period to another, as anybody familiar with Jewish history knows.

#### QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

The single factor and, I emphasize, the one and only factor, which has preserved our Jewish people throughout the ages, under all kinds of circumstances, has been the fulfillment of the mitzvoth in day-to-day life, such as the observance of Shabbat, the putting on of tefillin, and the Torah education of our children. These and all other mitzvoth are already embedded in the Torah and have been observed by Jews since the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai, and they have been observed in the same way throughout the ages without change.

A further proof that this is the "secret" of Jewish survival, if further proof is necessary, is the fact that there have always been deviationists; the Torah relates that immediately after the Torah was given at Sinai there were the worshippers of the golden calf. Similarly, throughout the period of the judges, prophets, and kings, as well as the post-biblical period of the second Beit Hamikdash [Temple], and later. These deviationists attempted to steer another course, away from traditional Judaism, but they could never take root within the Jewish people. Either these deviationists eventually realized their mistake and returned to the fold of observance of Torah and mitzvoth, or they were completely assimilated among the nations of the world, without having anything further to do with the Jewish people, least of all with Jewish survival.

On the basis of the principle that the essential thing is the deed, as quoted earlier, I want to bring out the practical conclusion of the thoughts expressed in this letter, namely, that regardless of how your daily life expressed itself in the past, it is my duty, inasmuch as we have established contact between us, to point out to you your duty to yourself, to your surroundings, and to our Jewish people as a whole, to order your life in fullest accord with the Torah and mitzvoth in the daily life and conduct.

Needless to say, I realize that such a change entails difficulties and the giving up of various things, but surely it is a small sacrifices in relation to the enormous privilege of fulfilling a sacred obligation to our people. In addition to your sacred obligation to the Jewish community in which you live, and to your family.

May G-d grant that you will have good news to report in all of the above. With blessing,

### MOSHIACH MATTERS

When Moses encounters G-d at the burning bush, an extended conversation ensues. G-d wants Moses to redeem the Jewish people, to take them out of Egypt. Moses demurs, finding several excuses

why he should not be the Redeemer. At one point, he tells G-d, "Please send the one You will send." Moses was asking G-d to send someone else, namely, Moshiach. Since G-d was going to send Moshiach in the future anyway, Moses asked G-d to send Moshiach immediately. Moses wanted the first redemption to also be the last (From Reflections of Redemption, by Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann o.b.m.

# **CAWORD**FROM THE DIRECTOR

This past Tuesday, the 28th of Tevet, was the birthday of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson, mother of the Rebbe.

There is a famous story told about Rebbetzin Chana's selfless dedication for the dissemination of Torah. Rebbetzin Chana followed her husband, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, when sent into internal exile by the Stalinist government. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was deterred from recording the unique expositions on the mystical, kabalistic parts of the Torah because of the lack of such simple provisions as paper and ink. Instead of paper, he wrote in the margins of books. But ink? He could hardly reuse old ink.

Rebbetzin Chana used to go out into the woods and gather wild plants. From these she managed to make her own ink so that her illustrious husband could continue writing.

After Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's passing, Rebbetzin Chana was finally allowed to leave Russia. With total devotion and complete disregard for her own personal safety, Rebbetzin Chana smuggled out her husband's manuscripts. These manuscripts were later edited and published by her son, the Rebbe.

As the Rebbe himself explained at a gathering commemorating his mother's yartzeit, a great lesson can be learned from her courage and self-sacrifice. And surely this is an important lesson that we can meditate upon as the awesome day of Yom Kippur approaches.

When faced with an obstacle, one must not be concerned or overwhelmed by the fact that it seems insurmountable. One cannot become weighted down by the difficulties. Rather, we must work to overcome the obstacle without pre-conceived notions or calculations of the impossibility of the situation. We must do our part-what must be done. Ultimately, because we are doing what G-d expects of us, we will be successful.

# באיינים בליינים בליינ

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



Published by **Lubavitch Youth Organization**1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213
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Long ago in the small village of Sassov there lived a Jewish wood-chopper, a man of deep and pure faith. No one knew his name, and so, he was known simply as "the villager."

All week he made his way into the forest and chopped wood which he sold in the town. During the week, he and his family lived frugally, eating just enough to sustain themselves. But for the Holy Shabbat, he joyfully bought challahs, candles, and other delicacies. Not only did the family enjoy the Shabbat treats, but despite their poverty, they always invited others to join them. At times they even went without food themselves so that their guests had enough to eat.

One Friday morning the villager stood with his bundles in the village square waiting for customers to buy his wood when a woman came and bought the whole lot for six silver coins. He was about to begin his customary Shabbat purchases when the tzadik Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov approached him with a request. There was a woman in the town who had recently been widowed. She was so overcome with grief that she lay in bed all day weeping, and so was completely unable to take care of her two young children. Her health was failing and the poor orphans were going hungry. Could he help? Now the villager was a good-hearted man. He immediately took two silver coins and handed them over to the tzadik. "Thank you so much, but could you perhaps give a bit more?" The wood-cutter reached into his pocket and handed over another two coins. Again, the tzadik thanked him and asked for maybe a bit more for the family. "I'm sorry Rebbe, but I can't give any more. I have only two coins left. As it is I won't have enough money to buy wine and challa, but I must leave enough to buy candles to brighten our Shabbat."

Reb Moshe Leib was moved by the man's kindness, generosity and his love for the mitzva of Shabbat candles. He turned to the man and asked, "Do you have any valuable object in your house?"

"No, Rebbe, I have nothing except an old cow."

"When you return home," said the Rebbe, "sell the cow, and with the money you make, buy the first thing that comes your way. I give you my blessing that G-d will grant you success."

The wood-cutter ran home happily, brimming with anticipation. But when he told his wife of the plan to sell the cow, she absolutely refused. "How can we sell the cow? Its milk is our main source of food. How do you imagine we'll live?" And with that the discussion ended.

When Shabbat was over the couple went to the barn to feed their cow. No sooner had they entered the barn when a carriage with two men pulled up. "Do you have a cow for sale?" they asked. The astonished Jew saw the words of the tzadik materializing before his eyes. His wife blurted out: "We'll sell only for a hundred rubles!" The men agreed to pay the absurd price. Now, it was clear that the blessing was having its effect.

The next morning the wood-cutter went to town with the hundred rubles intending to carry out the Rebbe's instructions. He noticed a group of landowners gathered for the auction of a choice estate. The Jew's simple faith was so great that he pushed himself into the crowd intent upon buying the estate regardless of the fact that he couldn't afford it.

The wealthy landowners looked at the poor Jew. What a nerve he had to try to bid against them! They would punish him for his chutzpa and at the same time help themselves. They agreed not to bid on the property at all. When the Jew's offer would be accepted, he would lose everything because there was no way that he could afford the complete payment. Their plan succeeded. The wood-cutter bought the estate, giving the one hundred rubles as a deposit, and returned home feeling very satisfied.

That night as the Jewish family slept, there was a loud knock at the door. They were

Dedicated in honor of a dear friend of the Lubavitch Youth Organization

Mr. Joseph Fraiman

shocked to see the village priest standing in the doorway. "I understand that you bought an estate today, and I would like to be your partner," the priest said. Having heard about the low price, he figured he could take advantage of the simple woodcutter.

"I agree to the partnership if you will pay the total outstanding amount," answered the Jew. The priest eagerly accepted, handed him the money, and agreed to formalize the deal in a few days. When the day came to complete payment on the estate, the furious landowners couldn't believe their eyes as the Jew paid up the entire balance.

The earnest Jew set out to visit his newly acquired estate. Travelling down the road he saw a group of people crowded around an accident. "What happened?" he inquired.

"The priest was just killed in an accident when his horses overturned the wagon," was the reply.

The Jew approached the accident site. It was his "partner" in the estate! Now, the property belonged to him alone. The blessing of Reb Moshe Leib had been fulfilled, and in gratitude the villager distributed large amounts of charity to the poor throughout his long and prosperous life.



And I appeared (va'eira) unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob...I have also heard the groaning of the Children of Israel (Exodus 6:3-5)

The word "va'eira" is in both the past and present tense, indicating that the revelation of G-dliness that existed in the times of our forefathers continues to exist today as well. Every Jew possesses the quality of Abraham (love of G-d), the quality of Isaac (awe of G-d), and the quality of Jacob (mercy); the revelation of these inner traits is akin to G-d's revelation to the Patriarchs. (Ohr HaTorah)

Moses was concerned that after 210 years of slavery in Egypt the Jewish people would have grown too accustomed to the exile to fully absorb the message that their redemption was imminent. G-d's answer about our Patriarchs thus reassured him that his worries were unwarranted; the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can never accustom themselves to exile, for to them it is an unnatural state. Every day that passes is as bitter as the very first. The same is true for us today. Despite the fact that this present exile has lasted more than 1900 years, the Jewish people is more than ready to accept the message that the Final Redemption is indeed imminent. (The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Shemot, 5751)

You shall speak (tedaber) all that I command you (Exodus 7:2) The word "tedaber" is related to "tadber" - "and you shall rule over." The defeat of Pharaoh, the epitome of arrogance and pride, could only be brought about by an individual such as Moses, the epitome of humility and nullification

before G-d. (Torat Chaim)



**4:31** Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area 2 Shevat / Jan 12 Torah Portion Va'eira Shabbat ends **5:35 pm**