

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

The Torah portion Vayeishev chronicles Joseph's trials and tribulations from the time he left his father's house and was sold into slavery until his eventual appointment to the position of second in command of the entire Egypt. But Joseph was more than just an individual, and his life showed the path that the Jewish nation would take. Indeed, Joseph's life closely parallels the life of every Jew, and by studying his story we can better understand our own mission in life.

Joseph began his life by enjoying the comfort of his father's household. The most beloved of Jacob's children, Joseph enjoyed a special relationship with his father. Not only did Jacob make him the famous coat of many colors, but he learned Torah with him day and night, while the other brothers were busy shepherding the flocks. For Joseph, this period was his happiest, both spiritually and physically.

This situation is analogous to the condition of the Jewish soul before coming into the body. A "veritable part of G-d," it exists on the highest plane, enjoying the proximity of only holiness and G-dly light. Even when the soul has descended into this world and is in the fetus, it still enjoys the luxury of learning the entire Torah before the baby is born.

But suddenly, Joseph's idyllic existence was interrupted—"Joseph was brought down to Egypt." Sold as a slave, his situation continued to deteriorate until he found himself a prisoner in Pharaoh's jail. Spiritually as well, Joseph could not have been in a worse situation. Plucked from the refuge of the tent of learning Torah, Joseph was dropped directly into the most corrupt and depraved civilization of his era.

This symbolizes the soul's dramatic descent into this world. No longer can it bask in G-d's glory—the soul finds itself trapped in a physical body, subject to its whims and fancies. It must endure the temptations to which the body is drawn, and overcome all sorts of trials. The soul longs to return to its source above.

Yet we learn that Joseph triumphed and attained an even higher position than he had enjoyed while in his father's house. Joseph was victorious spiritually as well, as the Torah calls him, "Joseph the Righteous," for despite his elevation to high office Joseph retained his purity and goodness. Joseph turned his descent to Egypt into triumph and ascent, emerging the master and ruler.

This then is the purpose of the soul's journey down into this world and its imprisonment within the body: Our task is to subjugate the Evil Inclination and conduct our lives according to the dictates of Torah. Overcoming the obstacles which try to prevent us from doing mitzvot enables us to attain greater spirituality than would have been possible had the soul remained above.

*Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

## Tomorrow Will Be Much Better

By Lazer Gurkow

### INCREASE OR REDUCE

There are two ways to light Chanukah candles. In fact, this was an argument between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. Hillel said to light one candle the first night and build up to eight. Shammai said to light eight candles the first night and work down to one.

The Talmud gives us the legal arguments behind their respective opinions. Shammai said we should celebrate the days that are left, while Hillel said we should celebrate the days that have passed because of how the Chanukah miracle occurred. Shammai would have you light seven candles, reflecting the seven miracles to come. But Hillel reasoned that because that little cruse of oil started to burn into its second night, you light two candles on the second night.

### TWO PATHS TOWARD CHANGE

Hillel and Shammai's debate applies to every area of growth in life. One is to lessen the harmful behavior, the other is to grow the positive behavior.

Suppose you need to break out of the terrible habit of teasing. You are disgusted by your propensity for the caustic, sarcastic remarks that slip off your tongue without notice.

Shammai says, stop cold turkey. Be your own cruelest dictator and show yourself no mercy. But remember this: The beginnings are

always hardest. If you stay with it, tomorrow will be a little easier and the next day will be even easier, and it will get easier after that.

Hillel takes a different view. Hillel tells you to go easy on yourself and not worry too much if you slip up the first day despite your greatest effort. You can't expect to be perfect from the get-go.

### THE CRITICAL START

Shammai was an exacting teacher; he only accepted pupils of the highest caliber. Hillel was a populist, who took in any student who applied. Thus, Shammai developed an exacting approach and demanded a high standard from his students. Hillel developed a more welcoming approach, one that anyone can adopt.

Hillel's approach is embedded in the way we light our Chanukah candles today. We keep growing, step by step, candle by candle, light by light and mitzvah by mitzvah. Before we know it, we will have built a huge edifice of mitzvahs, a conglomerate comprised of many little pieces, many individual lights.

When Moshiach comes, things will change. We will all be capable of living up to Shammai's standards. This is why Jewish tradition teaches that when Moshiach comes, we will switch over to Shammai's approach and light eight candles the first night and reduce from there. Until that time, we will be proud and effective Hillels—lighting up the world, candle by candle, little flame, by little flame.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## The Dog Tag Dilemma

By Doron Kornbluth

*I learned what a Protestant B is from an essay by Debra Darvick that appeared in an issue of Hadassah Magazine. It is a chapter from a book she is working on about the American Jewish experience.*

*And this essay is about the experience of retired Army Major Mike Neulander, who now lives in Newport News, Virginia, and who is now a Judaic silversmith. This is his story.*



In the fall of 1990, things were heating up in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I had been an Army captain and a helicopter maintenance test pilot for a decade, and received notice that I would be transferred to the First Cavalry Division, which was on alert for the Persian Gulf War. Consequently, I also got wind of the Department of Defense “dog tag dilemma” vis-à-vis Jewish personnel. Then as now, Jews were forbidden by Saudi law to enter the country. But our Secretary of Defense flat-out told the king of Saudi Arabia, “We have Jews in our military. They’ve trained with their units and they’re going. Blink and look the other way.”

With Kuwait occupied and the Iraqis at his border, King Fahd did the practical thing. We shipped out, but there was still the issue of classification. Normally the dog tags of Jewish servicemen are imprinted with the word “Jewish.” But Defense, fearing that

this would put Jewish soldiers at further risk should they be captured on Iraqi soil, substituted the classification “Protestant B” on the tags. I didn’t like the whole idea of classifying Jews as Protestant-anything, and so I decided to leave my dog tag alone. I figured if I were captured, it was in G-d’s hands. Changing my tags was tantamount to denying my religion, and I couldn’t swallow that.

In September 1990 I went off to defend a country that I was prohibited from entering. The “Jewish” on my dog tag remained as clear and unmistakable as the American star on the hood of every Army truck.

A few days after my arrival, the Baptist chaplain approached me. “I just got a secret message through channels,” he said. “There’s going to be a Jewish gathering. A holiday? Simkatoro or something like that. You want to go? It’s at 1800 hours at Dhahran Airbase.”

Simkatoro turned out to be Simchat Torah, a holiday that hadn’t registered on my religious radar in eons. Services were held in absolute secrecy in a windowless room in a cinder block building. The chaplain led a swift and simple service. We couldn’t risk singing or dancing, but Rabbi Ben Romer had managed to smuggle in a bottle of Manischewitz. Normally I can’t stand the stuff, but that night, the wine tasted of Shabbat and family and Seders of long ago. My soul was warmed by the forbidden alcohol and by the memories swirling around me and my fellow soldiers. We were strangers to one another in a land stranger than any of us had ever experienced, but for that brief hour, we were home.

Soon after, things began coming to a head. The next time I was able to do anything remotely Jewish was Chanukah. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was G-d’s hand that placed a Jewish colonel in charge of our unit. Colonel Lawrence Schneider relayed messages of Jewish gatherings to us immediately.

When notice of the Chanukah party was decoded, we knew about it at once. The first thing we saw when we entered the tent was food, tons of it. Care packages from the States—cookies, latkes, sour cream and

applesauce, and cans and cans of gefilte fish. The wind was blowing dry across the tent, but inside there was an incredible feeling of celebration. As Rabbi Romer talked about the theme of Chanukah and the ragtag bunch of Maccabee soldiers fighting Jewry’s oppressors thousands of years ago, it wasn’t hard to make the connection to what lay ahead of us.

We blessed the candles, acknowledging the King of the Universe who commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights. We said the second prayer, praising G-d for the miracles He performed, in those days and now. And we sang the third blessing, the Shehecheyanu, thanking G-d for keeping us in life and for enabling us to reach this season.

We knew war was imminent. All week we had received reports of mass destruction, projections of the chemical weapons that were likely to be unleashed. Intelligence estimates put the first rounds of casualties at 12,500 soldiers. I heard those numbers and thought, “That’s my whole division!” I sat back in my chair, my gefilte fish cans at my feet. They were in the desert, about to go to war, singing songs of praise to G-d who had saved our ancestors in battle once before.

That Chanukah in the desert solidified for me the urge to reconnect with my Judaism. I felt religion welling up inside me. Any soldier will tell you that there are no atheists in foxholes, and I know that part of my feelings were tied to the looming war and my desire to get with G-d before the unknown descended in the clouds of battle. It sounds corny, but as we downed the latkes and cookies and wiped the last of the applesauce from our plates, everyone grew quiet, keenly aware of the link with history.

The trooper beside me stared ahead at nothing in particular, absentmindedly fingering his dog tag. “How’d you classify?” I asked, nodding to my tag. Silently, he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt and held it out for me to read. Like mine, his read, “Jewish.”

*Doron Kornbluth is an author, internationally renowned speaker. He can be reached at: [www.doronkornbluth.com](http://www.doronkornbluth.com)*

## World's Largest Chanukah Menorah



The World’s Largest Chanukah Menorah will be lighted on Fifth Avenue and 59th Street, near Central Park, between the Plaza and the Pierre Hotels. The first candle will be lit on Thursday evening, December 7th. The Menorah will be lit on all evenings of Chanukah at 5:30 PM (Friday at about 3:45 PM; Saturday night at 8:30 PM).

The World’s Largest Chanukah Menorah, sponsored by the Lubavitch Youth Organization, was specially designed by world-renowned artist Yaacov Agam. Mr. Agam’s design was inspired by a hand drawing by the Rambam (Maimonides) of the original Menorah in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The giant Menorah will be lighted nightly with genuine oil lamps. Specially designed glass chimneys will protect the Chanukah lights from the Central Park winds. For more information please call (718) 778- 6000.

## A Call To Action

### PUBLICIZE THE MIRACLE

One of the special aspects of lighting the Chanukah menorah is to publicize the miracle that took place for our ancestors “in those days at this time.” In addition to lighting your own Chanukah menorah each night of Chanukah, help publicize the miracle in a big way by encouraging friends and relatives who might otherwise not be kindling the Chanukah lights to do so.

A box of candles and tin menorah cost as little as \$2, so this is one mitzvah that won’t strain the budget!

You can share the joy of Chanukah on the Internet by visiting the “Festival of Light!” at [festival.chabad.org](http://festival.chabad.org) and light up the world with a Mitzvah.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

*The Extraordinary Opportunity of a University Professor*

By the Grace of G-d  
20th of Kislev 5732  
Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive regards from you through our mutual and esteemed friend Rabbi S.D. Raichik, who has written to me about his visit with you and your participation in the worthy cause, in which you also took in your children as partners.

In the light of what Rabbi Raichik has written to me about his acquaintance with you, I am confident that you will utilize your distinguished position, which brings you into personal contact with Jewish youth, to strengthen also their Jewish identity. To be sure, the courses which you teach are undoubtedly far removed from the religious and spiritual aspects of Jewish identity. However, it is surely unnecessary to emphasize to you that students generally look up to their professors not only as experts in their particular field, but also as persons and individuals who have accomplished a great deal in their life, and have attained high status.

Consequently, the views and ideas that a professor expresses, and especially his personal way of life and world outlook, directly and indirectly influence the students, and create in them a desire to emulate their professors. And even those who for one reason or another are rebellious inwardly recognize that the achievements of their professors should be emulated.

In the light of this, a professor in college or university has an extraordinary opportunity to benefit his students by word, and even more so, by example. Even if an extra effort in this direction may entail certain difficulties which are sometimes not imaginary nor magnified, but real – the thought of how much good a little extra effort might be, and how much it can be reflected and multiplied in the loves of the young people who so badly need guidance and inspiration, should make all such difficulties worthwhile.

Although the above has been written in general terms, with a view to disseminating Jewish values, etc., it is important to bear in mind the dictum of our Sages of blessed memory that “the essential thing is the deed,” namely the actual Jewish experience in daily life. For, Judaism is a way of life that is not relegated to several days in the year, specific holy days, or even Shabbos, but embraces the entire Jewish life each and every day. It is for this reason that the Torah and Mitzvot are referred to as “our life,” indicating that it must be continuous and uninterrupted, just as life must be continued and uninterrupted. Herein the Jewish religion radically differs from any other religion in that it is not something additional to a person, but is intimately the person himself, for a Jew and the Torah and Mitzvot are inseparable.

Much more could be said on this subject, but I trust the above will suffice. I will only conclude that inasmuch as we are about to celebrate the festival of Chanukah, when we will be lighting the Chanukah candles in growing numbers from day to day, indicating the need to spread the light of the Torah and Mitzvot in a growing measure, since it is written, “A Mitzva is a lamp and the Torah is light,” thereby illuminating the Jewish soul of which it is said, “A lamp of G-d is the soul of man” – may this be so with you and me and all our people.

With esteem and blessing,

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Looking out of his window one day, Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) observed the street being cleaned: the garbage was swept together into a little pile, and then a number of piles were swept together

into a big mound. Rabbi Shneur Zalman commented to his family, "This is how things will look before Moshiach comes. Today, wealth is in the hands of many people. But before Moshiach comes, money will be concentrated either in the hands of a few private individuals or in the hands of the government.

(From From Exile to Redemption)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

*On Chanukah, we celebrate the miracle of the small Jewish army's victory over the powerful Greek war machine. Just as importantly, it is the miracle of a small cruse of oil, enough to last for one day, remaining lit for eight days until new oil could be procured. Our Sages in the Talmud describe the miracle of the oil as follows:*

*"During the occupation of the Holy Land by the Greeks, the latter entered the Hechel [Inner Sanctum of the Holy Temple] and defiled all the oil in the Hechel. When the Hasmoneans defeated them, one cruse of oil was found, however, which had not been touched by the Greeks. It contained oil sufficient for one day only. The menorah was rekindled and the oil miraculously lasted for eight days."*

*If the Greeks wished to prevent the Jews from lighting the menorah, why did they merely defile the oil and not destroy it? The Greeks did not want to prevent the rekindling of the menorah. Rather, they wanted the menorah to be rekindled, but with defiled oil. They purposely left a supply of defiled oil in the Hechel -- rather than in its regular storage place -- to make it easily available for this purpose.*

*Moreover, they actually wanted to bring about the rekindling of the menorah, in its holy place in the Hechel, whence it should spread its light everywhere as before, except that its light should come from oil that had the Greek "touch."*

*Thus, the battle of the Greeks was not merely a physical battle but a spiritual battle as well. The Greeks were willing to recognize the Torah, or even accept it, as a work of profound philosophy and wisdom, provided it was considered a human creation. It was not the suppression of the Torah that they desired, rather, they strove to deny its Divine origin.*

*The insistence of the Maccabees to use only pure, consecrated oil was the visible symbol of the holiness of the Jewish way of life.*

*May we rekindle the lights in the Holy Temple this very Chanukah and celebrate the holiday of light in a world illuminated with the light of Moshiach -- may it be now.*

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.



Published by  
**Lubavitch Youth Organization**  
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213  
phone 718 778 6000

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**Program Director**  
**Secretary**  
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# IT HAPPENED ONCE



More than 2,000 years ago there was a period of time when the Land of Israel was part of the Syrian-Greek Empire, ruled by the dynasty of the Seleucids. In 174 BCE (3586), Antiochus IV ruled the region. He was called Epiphanes, meaning "the gods' beloved," but people called him Epimanes ("madman"), a title more suited to the character of this harsh and cruel king.

Wanting to unify his kingdom through common religion and culture, Antiochus tried to root out the individualism of the Jews by suppressing the practice of all Jewish law. He also meddled in the affairs of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, installing idol-worshipping High Priests who paid him handsome tributes.

At that time, Antiochus was also engaged in a successful war against Egypt. But messengers from Rome arrived and commanded him to stop the war, and he had to yield. Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, a rumor spread that a serious accident had befallen Antiochus. Thinking that he was dead, the people rebelled against Menelaus, the corrupt High Priest, who then fled together with his friends.

Antiochus returned from Egypt enraged by Roman interference with his ambitions. When he heard what had taken place in Jerusalem, he ordered his army to fall upon the Jews. Thousands of Jews were killed. Antiochus then enacted a series of harsh decrees: Jewish worship was forbidden, and the scrolls of the Law were confiscated and burned. Sabbath rest, circumcision and the dietary laws were prohibited under penalty of death. Many brave Jews refused, preferring death.

One day, the henchmen of Antiochus arrived in the village of Modiin where Mattityahu, a respected and elderly priest, lived. The Syrian officer built an altar in the marketplace of the village and demanded that Mattityahu offer sacrifices to the Greek gods. Mattityahu replied, "I, my sons and my brothers are determined to remain loyal to the covenant that our G-d made with our ancestors!"

Thereupon, a Hellenized Jew approached the altar to offer a sacrifice. Mattityahu grabbed his sword and killed him, and his sons and friends fell upon the Syrian officers and men. They killed many of them and chased the rest away. They then destroyed the altar.

Mattityahu knew that Antiochus would be enraged when he heard what had happened, and would certainly send troops to punish him and his followers. And so, Mattityahu and his sons and friends fled to the hills of Judea.

All loyal and courageous Jews joined them. They formed legions, and from time to time they left their hiding places to fall upon enemy detachments and outposts, and to destroy the pagan altars that were built by order of Antiochus.

Before his death, Mattityahu called his sons together and urged them to continue to fight in defense of G-d's Torah. He asked them to follow the counsel of their brother Shimon the Wise, and their leader in warfare was to be their brother Judah the Strong, or Judah the Maccabee.

The Maccabees won battle after battle, including one in which they fended off an army of more than 40,000 men.

Then the Maccabees returned to Jerusalem to liberate it. They entered the Temple and cleared it of the idols placed there by the Syrian vandals. Judah and his followers built a new altar, which he dedicated on the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev, in the year 139 BCE (3622).

Since the golden Menorah had been stolen by the Syrians, the Maccabees now made one of cheaper metal. When they wanted to light it, they found only a small cruse of pure olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest Yochanan. It was sufficient to create light for only one day.

By a miracle of G-d, it continued to burn for eight days, until new oil was available.

That miracle proved that G-d had again taken His people under His protection. In memory of this, our sages appointed these eight days as a holiday of annual thanksgiving and lighting candles.

Once this most important task was accomplished, Judah Maccabi led his freshly trained troops to the aid of the regions and villages harassed by the spiteful neighbors of Judea, then he led his army across the Jordan River against the Ammonites.

Their capital fell before the furious onslaught of the Jewish troops. Judah's brother Shimon led an army north to aid the plagued Jews of Galilee. Judea was again free, and all parts captured by the neighboring nation had been recovered.

The Maccabees leave us with an empowering message that resonates in all times and all places: Never cower in the face of tyranny. Do your part, trust in G-d, and success is sure to come.

## THOUGHTS

### THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion



#### And Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age (Gen. 37:3)

Why is this cited as a reason for the special bond which existed between Israel and his son Joseph? Did he not have other children who were born when he was already an old man? Issachar and Zebulun were the same age as Joseph, and Benjamin would be born even later.

The phrase "son of his old age" is therefore interpreted to apply to Joseph himself; his actions were those of an old and wise individual who had already acquired a lifetime of wisdom. (Toldot Avraham)

#### And Joseph was brought down to Egypt (39:1)

"He reigned over them," the Midrash relates, explaining that the word "brought down" is linguistically related to the word "reign." As proof of this, the Midrash cites a verse about Moshiach, "And he shall reign from sea to sea." What is the connection between Joseph's descent into the cesspool of ancient Egypt, and the rule of Moshiach?

The Jewish history of exile actually began when Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and, as the prototype of all other exiles to follow, its true purpose was the elevation and ascent of the Jewish people which would follow its suffering. The objective of our present exile is likewise the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

#### Joseph was handsome in form and handsome in appearance (39:6)

"Handsome in form"--scrupulous in the performance of positive mitzvot. "Handsome in appearance"--equally scrupulous in keeping the negative commandments. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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May the Chanukah lights usher in the Great lights of Moshiach

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### 4:11 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

25 Kislev/ Dec 8

Torah Portion *veyaishv*

Blessing of the new month Tevet

Shabbat ends 5:14 pm