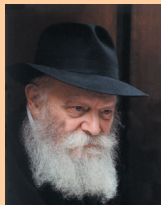


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion*

This week's Torah portion, Toldot, begins with the words, "And these are the generations of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham: Avraham begot Yitzchak."

According to the Talmud, one of the reasons for the repetitiveness of this verse is to emphasize the fact that, according to natural law, Avraham was unable to father children at that age.

When Sara conceived and gave birth to a son the nations of the world scoffed, intimating that Avraham was not the biological father.

G-d therefore fashioned Yitzchak's facial features to look exactly like his father's, thereby proving his paternity and dispelling any misconceptions.

"The nations of the world" had no difficulty accepting Avraham's ability to father children in the spiritual sense -- spreading the belief in One G-d and fostering good deeds among mankind.

What they found impossible to believe, however, was that Avraham - by virtue of his faith in a G-d Who transcended natural law - could overcome his physical limitations and father a child in the literal sense as well.

The miraculous birth of Yitzchak demonstrated to the entire world that the physical body of the Jew -- not only his soul -- exists beyond the confines of nature and is created and directly sustained by G-d.

It is in this light that we can understand the words of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Previous Rebbe, which he uttered before being exiled to the far Eastern provinces of the Soviet Union, where he was sentenced by the Communist regime for the "crime" of spreading Judaism.

Addressing the assemblage of Chasidim who had come to see him off, the Rebbe declared, "...And let all the nations of the world be apprised that it is only our physical bodies that are in galut (exile) and subject to the yoke of the nations. Our souls are not in exile and can never be subjugated! No one can exert any influence over us when it comes to matters of Torah, mitzvot and Jewish practice!"

But what good does it do us to know that our souls are not in exile, if our physical bodies -- the only medium through which we can observe mitzvot and spread the wellsprings of Judaism -- are suffering the hardships of the galut?

The answer to this question comes from our ancestor Avraham, the very first Jew.

Avraham proved that whenever a Jew uncovers the supernatural dimensions of his soul, its G-dly light will illuminate his physical being as well.

In this way the physical body is elevated above the laws of nature, to a plane on which no power on earth can exert any influence.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. III

The Land of Israel: An Eternal Inheritance to an Eternal Nation

The way a writer opens his work reveals much about his fundamental approach and intent. This is certainly true when speaking about a great Torah giant and biblical commentator like Rashi.

(Rashi is the acronym of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, who is renowned for his legendary commentaries on the entire Torah and on the Talmud.)

Among all of Rashi's teachings, the one that the Rebbe would highlight most frequently was Rashi's opening statement in his commentary on the Torah.

Rashi begins:

Rabbi Yitzchak commented: The Torah should have started from "This month shall be for you," which is the first commandment given to Israel, the Jewish people. Why did G-d begin the Torah with "In the beginning?" Because of the profound message implied by the verse "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." "The strength of His works He related to His people to give them the inheritance of nations."

If the nations of the world will tell Israel, "You are robbers, for you conquered the lands of seven nations," Israel will respond to their accusation: "The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whomever He deemed proper."

Rashi invites a person to adopt a

way of thinking that stems from Torah's wisdom, which makes it clear that the land of Israel was given to the Jewish people by the Creator of heaven and earth.

In this way, it not only provides guidelines on how to answer the nations of the world, but also it aligns us with G-d's intent and empowers us to conduct our everyday life, in any and all settings, in a manner befitting for G-d to manifest His providence as He does in the land of Israel.

The Rebbe further explained that on this basis, it is possible to understand the emphasis on the word "strength" in the verse "The strength of His works He related to His people."

In order to refute the claims and arguments of the nations of the world, it is not sufficient to know that all existence is "His works." One must also realize that "the strength" -- referring to the inner intent and motivating purpose -- of "His works" was related to His people.

Additionally, the verse employs the verb "related," and not "told," because it connotes "conveyed." G-d conveyed and transmitted strength -- the inner motivating force of His works -- to His people. This strength is what enables the Divine service of the Jewish people to transform G-d's "works" -- material existence -- into holiness.

SLICE OF LIFE

Back and Forth

By Chaya Raizel Michaelson



I grew up going to reform synagogue all the way through my Bat Mitzva, and I loved it. I was devoted to my youth group where I made tons of great Jewish friends. Conversation topics included what our purpose is in life, feminist theory, and where we could best apply our talents to contribute to repairing the world.

I had aspirations to become a doctor. I would work in third world countries to give back to the world. I went to college wanting to put the whole Jewish thing on the back burner for a while. But in the midst of all the STEM classes, political demonstrations, clubs, Greek life, social life, etc., the promise of a free Birthright trip to Israel wooed me back into the folds of the Jewish world.

The love of Israel took hold of me, leading me to seek out other ways to get back to Israel. Looking back, I see how this was my soul expressing its thirst for Torah, but without all the means to do so.

I attended a Shabbaton in New Jersey where I met a woman who was a periodontist with eight children and a Shabbat table full of guests. This was my first time ever being in an Orthodox Jewish community, but after seeing her and how appreciative this woman's husband was of all she did, I wrote in my phone notes from

that weekend, "Made me want to have a Jewish husband. And also made me want to be religious LOL."

L-O-L. Who's laughing now?

I travelled back and forth to Israel throughout college, usually on secular trips, but I kept being drawn back to Torah. During college, while I was interning at a hospital in Jerusalem, I spent every afternoon learning at free classes in the Old City at the Aish HaTorah center to get all of my deep questions about Judaism and G-d answered.

It was my first real exposure to Torah study and I went at it relentlessly. In my politically-oriented college classes, I was exhausted by how often tides changed and how things that were accepted as bulletproof truths would disintegrate with the newest fad of thinking. But Torah always stayed the same.

I went through phases of leaning into or away from Torah observance. For a number of years I had a foot in each world. Once in a while, this schism, this rupture, would bubble up to the surface and I felt the pain of not knowing whether I could ever be content without acting on this truth in my life.

By the time my senior year rolled around, I was pretty far away from a Torah observant life, showing up to my local Chabad House in Glastonbury, Connecticut, once in a while. But I found that the more I leaned into the egotistical pursuit of self-actualization, the more lost I felt.

After college, I spent six months living in Tel Aviv, volunteering on the ambulances for Magen David Adom. On Fridays, I would go out with my friends till the late hours of the night. But as time went on, I started dragging myself out of bed on Saturday mornings to make it to services at Chabad, no matter how little sleep I got.

When I came home from that program, my grandma (of blessed memory) was sick. I leaned on Torah to get me through that rough time. I sat down with my Chabad House Rebbetzin and told her I had made a decision: I was ready to take on this journey. I started going to my Chabad House for Tanya classes and Shabbat services. I met a woman visiting from Crown Heights. She told me about a great place for young Jewish women to study Torah - Machon L'Yahadus. In true Jewish mother spirit, she invited me to come stay

with her for a week and check it out. I accepted her offer and took off time from work to head to Crown Heights.

In my one week at Machon L'Yahadus I grew exponentially. I was stunned by how committed these girls were to Torah study, with their little notebooks and diligence to the attendance and their stylish modest outfits.

Leaving behind two medical jobs and pending replies from graduate school applications, I decided to attend Machon L'Yahadus' Winter Program and continue on for the next semester. Although I wasn't really convinced that Crown Heights was for me, Rabbi Shloma Majeski our principal told me some great advice: If you're learning and you're being inspired, that's what matters.

This past year has been filled with amazing classes that got me absolutely hooked on Chassidic philosophy, the most warm welcome from the students at school, and the pure love and support of the staff.

I'm in my second school year at Machon, running to work at the Urgent Care center in the evenings. In high school and college I had these grandiose ideas on how I wanted to change the world. But now I'm seeing how much of a difference I can make by refining myself and giving back to the community here, in elevating this physical world to be a place where G-d feels comfortable to be. I still have aspirations to become a PA, maybe to become a little bit like that first woman who inspired me in New Jersey, but we'll see. With the help of Machon L'Yahadus, I'm figuring out what it really means to be a Jewish woman and live out the mission that only my individual soul can accomplish.

I recently saw some of my friends from my Jewish youth group. I gave them my life update, explained everything I do, and shared some Chassidic thoughts in the conversation. One of my friends told me, "You're the happiest I've ever seen you." Thank you G-d for sending me on this extremely windy journey that led me to Machon L'Yahadus, to the Rebbe, and to You. I can't wait to see what else You have in store for me.

For more information about Machon L'Yahadus visit womensyeshiva.org or call (718) 552-2422.



Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, Helps Dedicate Major New Chabad Campus House

Hundreds of students, alumni, faculty members, Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries from around the United States, and local and state officials gathered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to take part in the grand opening of its new 27,000-square-foot Jewish student center and dormitory.

"We created this space as a hub for inclusion, education and 'pro-semitism,'" said Rabbi Dovid Tiechtel, who together with his wife Goldie, are the directors of Illini Chabad. The Tiechtels paid homage to those who laid the groundwork for the Chabad—from the founders of Illinois' Jewish community, who arrived in Champaign just after the Civil War, to the numerous donors such as George and Pamela Rohr, who assisted with the purchase of the building.

Teachings...

You might think that divine sparks are meted out by simple protocol: The lowlier the creation, the lowlier the divine spark it holds.

Just the opposite: Only the highest sparks could descend to the lowest places and retain their power to sustain a being.

Those are the sparks remaining to be rescued today.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

PREVENTION IS WORTH TWICE THE CURE.

B.H.
10 Cheshvan 5734
Brooklyn, NY
Dr. and Mrs. -----
61 Cranwich Road
London, N.16

Greeting and Blessing:

In addition to the reports that I receive from time to time indirectly, I was pleased to receive just now Mrs. Stern's letter of the 4th of Cheshvan. I was gratified to read the good news about her activities in South Africa, especially with the schoolchildren. Now it is quite evident how important and urgent has been the appeal made in the latter part of this summer, centered on "From the mouths of babes to defeat and avenge our enemies."

The above, incidentally, conveys a basic lesson, which becomes more obvious by analogy from medicine, which has two general aspects: cure and prevention. The first has

to do with curing the sick; the second—with preventing sickness. At first glance, the accomplishment of the physician in curing the sick seems more impressive by its dramatic results, than preventive medicine, where there could be some delusion that sickness would be somehow avoided. In truth, however, it is surely better to be certain of immunity to sickness. The latter is the way of G-d as it is written, "All sickness, etc. I will not place on you, for I am your Healer."

In the present situation, the "enemy and avenger" has made no secret of his intentions, which emphasizes again how true is the saying of our Sages that "the person who has a miracle happen to them, does not recognize that miracle." And while the preventive powers of Torah and mitzvot are also in a matter of "the person who has a miracle happen to them, does not recognize that miracle," this is clearly the more desirable way, and may G-d grant that henceforth it will be only in this way.

In light of the above, it is more urgent than ever to spread the Torah, Toras Chayim, and your contribution through the "Betrachtungen" is certain an important part of this endeavor.

With esteem and blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Chasam Sofer was careful to note that in the blessings of the New Month we say: "He will redeem us speedily."

Speed is the main emphasis of our prayers.

Concerning the Redemption itself our prayers are not needed, for the Redemption has been promised to us by G-d.

(Customs of the Chasam Sofer)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The ninth of Kislev (Nov. 22, this year) marks the birthday and, 54 years later, the passing, of Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch, known as the Mitteler Rebbe.

About the Mitteler Rebbe it was said that he was so immersed in Chasidut that "if his finger would have been cut, it would have bled Chasidut instead of blood!"

When the Mitteler Rebbe was arrested by the Czarist government on slanderous charges (he was later released on the 10th of Kislev), even the government doctor, who was a prominent specialist, acknowledged that Chasidut was the Mitteler Rebbe's very essence and life.

The doctor told the Russian authorities that they must allow the Mitteler Rebbe to give talks on Chasidut to his Chasidim, explaining, "Just as you provide food for prisoners to ensure their existence, so too, must you allow him to teach Chasidut. His very life depends on it."

The authorities saw that this was true when, while imprisoned, the Mitteler Rebbe's health waned. They agreed to let fifty Chasidim enter his prison room twice weekly to listen to a Chasidic discourse.

But the Mitteler Rebbe was not only concerned about the spiritual life of his fellow Jews; he worked to better their situation materially, as well.

He encouraged thousands of Jews, both his Chasidim and others, to settle on the land as farmers so that they would not have to be at the mercy of the anti-Semitic landowners or peasants. He established twenty-two Jewish farm settlements on land near the town of Cherson, which he had convinced the government to give for this purpose. Many of his Chasidim, however, were reluctant to move so far away from their Rebbe. Thus, the Mitteler Rebbe promised to go to the trouble of travelling to them so he could teach Chasidut to them there.

The Rebbe spoke numerous times of the importance of celebrating the ninth and tenth of Kislev in a fitting manner, with gatherings that will foster brotherhood and lead to good resolutions. May such gatherings this year be in Jerusalem, with the Rebbe and all of his predecessors presiding.

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

Many years ago, after the rabbi of Tchentzikov had been married for eighteen years without having been blessed with children, he travelled to the Kozhnitzer Maggid to obtain the tzadik's blessing.

When the Kozhnitzer listened to the man's request he uttered a sigh from deep within his being. "The gates of heaven are closed to your petition!" he cried.

"No, no! Please, you must help me!" the man wept desperately.

"I cannot help you," said the Kozhnitzer. "But I will send you to someone else who will be able to help. You must go to a certain person who is called 'Shvartzte Wolf -- Black Wolf,' and he will be the one to help."

"Yes, I know him," the rabbi said, "He lives in my village, and a more coarse, miserable person you could never find."

At first the Kozhnitzer did not respond. The rabbi realized that if the Kozhnitzer was sending him to Black Wolf, he must have a good reason.

The Kozhnitzer then quietly revealed, "Black Wolf is head of the eighteen hidden saints whose merits sustain the world."

The rabbi sought out Black Wolf in the forest hut which was his home. Though cognizant of Black Wolf's true identity, the rabbi was still frightened to approach him.

He devised a ruse by which to gain admittance to his hut.

He would go into the forest just before Shabbat and when he found Black Wolf's house, would pretend that he had lost his way. He would beg to spend the holy Shabbat there, and under the circumstances, Black Wolf could hardly refuse a fellow Jew that favor.

Friday afternoon he set out and as planned reached Black Wolf's hut. He knocked on the door and the man's wife answered.

Her horrible appearance marked her as a true equal to her husband, for never had a more hideous and unpleasant woman been seen.

Nevertheless, the rabbi begged her to allow him to stay over Shabbat.

"Very well," she finally relented. "But if my husband finds you here, he'll tear you apart with his bare hands. You can't stay in here, but go into the stable if you want," she croaked.

Soon Black Wolf arrived home and entered the stable, his eyes blazing with hatred. "How dare you come here! If you set foot outside of this stable, I'll rip you apart with my bare hands!"

The frightened Jew shivered in his boots as he beheld the terrible visage of Black Wolf. Suddenly the thought came to the rabbi that a tzadik is so pure that he acts as a mirror, reflecting the image of the person who is looking upon him.

Thus, what he saw in the appearance of Black Wolf was nothing more or less than a picture of his own spiritual impurity. With that, he searched into his soul, and prayed from the deepest part of his being. He poured out his soul and in those few moments returned wholeheartedly to his Maker. He felt himself suffused with a warm, peaceful feeling.

Suddenly he was shaken from his reverie by the unexpected sensation of a soft hand being laid on his shoulder. He looked up, not quite sure what he would see, a shiver of fear passing through him. There stood Black Wolf, but instead of his accustomed fierce exterior, he had a refined and peaceful visage.

The visitor was ushered into the hut, which no longer appeared rough and tumble-down, but warm and inviting. Black Wolf's wife entered with her children, and their appearance, too, was beautiful and serene.

Black Wolf turned to his guest and said in a quiet voice, "I know why you have come here. I know, I know. You and your wife will rejoice in the birth of a boy. But you must name him Shvartzte Wolf."

The rabbi wondered to himself, "How can I name my son after him? It is not our custom

to name after the living," but he remained silent.

The following morning Shvartzte Wolf passed away.

After Shabbat, the Tchentzikover Rabbi returned home. In time, he revealed to his congregation the hidden identity of the hated Shvartzte Wolf.

True to his word, a baby boy was born and he was given the strange name "Shvartzte Wolf."

In the year 1945 Jews who had survived the horrors of the Holocaust began streaming into the Land of Israel. When the Belzer Rebbe held his first Melave Malka (Saturday night meal taking leave of the Sabbath Queen) in the Holy Land many Chasidim came and introduced themselves to the Rebbe.

This story was one of those related at that first Melave Malka of the Belzer Rebbe.

And at that memorable occasion one man stood before the assembled and said, "My name is Shvartzte Wolf ben Chana, and I am a descendant of that child who is spoken about in the story."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

And the boys grew up, and Esav [Esau] was an expert hunter (Gen. 25:27)

"Expert at deceiving his father into believing him to be pious and a scrupulous observer of the commandments," comments Rashi, the great Torah Sage.

Esav's hypocrisy is symbolic of our present Exile, in which the forces of evil are not as readily identifiable as they were during previous exiles. It is for this reason that our Exile is termed "Galut Edom" ("the Exile of Edom"), for the nation of Edom is descended from Esav.

When Moshiach comes, the "Deliverers will go up to Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esav, and kingship will be the L-rd's." (Lubavitcher Rebbe, Toldot, 5750)

And they called his name Esav...and he called his name Yaakov (Gen. 25:25-6)

Why is the plural -- "and they called his name" -- used for Esav, but the singular -- "and he called" -- used for Yaakov?

Esav is the father of all falsehood; many are those who find him attractive and seek him out. Yaakov, however, is the source of truth; only the rare individual desires his acquaintance. (Kli Yakar)

Two nations are in your womb...and one nation will be stronger Than the other nation (Gen. 25:23)

"When one will rise, the other will fall," comments Rashi.

Yaakov is symbolic of the Jew's G-dly soul; Esav is symbolic of man's animalistic drives and the Evil Inclination.

When the G-dly soul is strengthened (through learning Torah), the Evil Inclination is weakened without effort, as a natural consequence.

For just as physical darkness is dispelled when one lights a candle, so too is spiritual darkness dispelled when the light of Torah is allowed to illuminate. (Chasidic Teachings)



4:18 Candle Lighting Time
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4 Kislev / Nov 17
 Torah Portion Toldot
 Shabbat ends 5:19 PM

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Mr. David Schwartz

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