

L'Chaim



The great Sage Reish Lakish had once lived among the wild people called Loddites. Known for his bravery and prowess, the Loddites wanted him to be the leader of one of their fierce robber bands. Reish Lakish, however, was destined for greater things. He fled from those wicked people and changed his life completely, becoming a great baal teshuva and dedicating his tremendous intellect and power to the study of Torah. He married the sister of Rabbi Yochanan, the greatest Sage of the time, and excelled so much at his learning that he was appointed to a high position in the yeshiva at Tiberias.

Although Reish Lakish now spent all his days and nights in the study hall, he had lost none of his fire and strength. He feared no one but G-d, and would stand up to deceit or corruption whenever he encountered it, no matter what danger he had to face.

One morning, as Rabbi Yochanan walked to the Study Hall, he was attacked by a band of robbers who stole all his money. When he finally arrived at the Study Hall he was very shaken by the incident, and, although he tried to lead the class as usual, he was unable to concentrate on the questions his students posed. It became obvious that the great Sage was troubled by something.

Noticing that his teacher was deeply troubled, Reish Lakish pressed Rabbi Yochanan for an explanation. "What is wrong? Has something happened to you?" Rabbi Yochanan answered by way of a hint, saying, "The whole body depends on the heart, but the heart depends on the pocket." Reish Lakish didn't understand his teacher's allusion, and he repeated his question.

This time Rabbi Yochanan explained clearly, "I can't gather my thoughts because as I was coming to study today, I was set upon by a band of robbers. I was carrying a great deal of money, and they stole it all. Now I will have to spend my energy trying to support myself and my family, and I'm afraid I won't be able to learn Torah as I did before."

Reish Lakish was outraged. "Where did they attack you and which way did they go?" he demanded to know. They went out to the road and Rabbi Yochanan pointed to the location of the attack. Not bothering to bring any weapons, Reish Lakish set out to find the robbers.

He found them in a nearby forest and he shouted in a booming voice, "Stop where you are!" The robbers were so surprised by his temerity they meekly waited for him to approach. When he reached them, he faced the band and bellowed, "How dare you steal from the greatest Sage of the Jewish people! The entire world is sustained by the holy words he utters, and you, low creatures that you are, have dared to rob him!" The hardened criminals were moved by his words. "We had no idea who he was. We'll return half the money to him."

But Resh Lakish had no intention of making a deal.

"Absolutely not!" he cried. "You won't keep even one penny of his money!" And Reish Lakish grabbed his teacher's purse from their clutches.

In a similar display of bravery, Reish Lakish once rescued another great Jewish Sage.

Once, as a group of rabbis was walking down a deserted road, Rabbi Ammi was captured by a roving band of robbers. So ruthless and cruel were these outlaws, that once captured, no one ever escaped from them.

Everyone fled; only Reish Lakish refused to abandon Rabbi Ammi.

Risking his life, Reish Lakish pursued the robbers, and, using his experience with brigands, he cleverly managed to obtain Rabbi Ammi's release.

The robber chief, however, demanded to know what kind of reward he would receive for having freed the well-known rabbi.

Reish Lakish thought quickly. Certainly such a cut-throat deserved nothing better than the end of a rope, but he replied, "Come with me to our greatest Sage, Rabbi Yochanan, and he will bless you and pray for you."

This answer pleased the chief, and he and Reish Lakish proceeded to the study hall of Rabbi Yochanan. "We have been promised that the Rabbi will bless us, since we returned your comrade to you. We never meant him any harm, and now we want you to pray for us," announced the robber chief.

Rabbi Yochanan understood Reish Lakish's object in bringing the brigand to him. He looked the robber chief in the eye and said, "Since your intentions were so noble, I bless you that whatever were your plans for this man, G-d should repay you in the same way." True to Rabbi Yochanan's words, the robber band was attacked in the forest and killed to the last man.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

In the beginning (bereishis) G-d created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1)

Our Sages tell us that the entire world was created solely for the sake of the two things that are called "reishis" ("first") -- Israel and the Torah.

Speaking about the Messianic Era, the Prophet Isaiah said, "The nation and the kingdom that does not serve you will be destroyed."

When Moshiach comes the nations of the world will lend aid and support to the Jewish people, recognizing that their very existence depends on their service; those who refuse to accept their subservient position will disappear from the face of the earth. (Likutei Sichot Vol. XXIV)

In the beginning G-d created (Gen. 1:1)

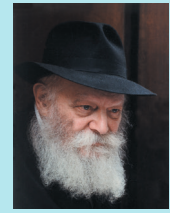
The "beginning" and foundation of all knowledge is the understanding that "G-d created the heavens and the earth" -- acknowledging the Creator Who not only made the world but actively involves Himself in its existence. This first principle is the basis upon which all others are predicated. (Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov)

And man was not there to work the ground (Gen. 2:5)

A person must not put all of himself into working the ground; only his hands should be involved. Investing too much of oneself into this area is a sure sign that an individual has forfeited some of that which makes him "man": "and man was not there." (Ma'ayanot Hanetzach)



6:01 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
28 Tishrei/Oct 13
Torah Portion *Bereishit*
Blessing of the new month Cheshvan
Shabbat ends **6:58 pm**



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

"In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth." With these momentous words the Torah begins the very first chapter of Bereishis, establishing G-d's Kingship over all of creation.

The Torah, however, is not history book. The Torah is the guide by which we live our lives, applying its teachings to every aspect of our existence.

The ancient Sage, Rabbi Yitzchak, raises a pertinent question.

"Why does the Torah open with the story of Creation?" he asks, as quoted by Rashi in his commentary. "Why didn't G-d begin with the words, 'This month is to you,'-- the first commandment containing practical implications?"

"The might of His deeds He told to His nation; to bequeath to them the heritage of the nations," Rabbi Yitzchak himself answers.

"If the nations of the world will one day accuse the Jewish people of being thieves, having 'stolen' the land of Israel from the seven nations who formerly inhabited it, they will counter, 'The entire earth belongs to G-d! He is the One Who created it and bequeathed it to whom He saw fit. It was His will to give the land to the nations; it was His will to take it from them and give it to us.'"

According to this explanation, the entire order of the Torah's portions was changed solely to refute the world's complaint that the Jewish people misappropriated their land. But is their accusation really so important that G-d would change even one letter in His holy Torah for its sake? Would not a refutation in the Oral Tradition have been sufficient to counter whatever complaint Gentiles would one day lodge against the nation of Israel?

In truth, the Torah's choice of language holds significance not only for the nations of the world but for Jews themselves.

"In the beginning" contains an important lesson for every Jew to apply in his daily life.

In general, the life of a Jew may be divided into two realms: the religious and the secular.

The Jew willingly observes his various religious obligations because the Torah requires him to.

When, however, he is asked to also sanctify those mundane aspects of daily existence that seemingly fall outside the domain of religious observance, he balks, rejecting this demand as an invasion of privacy.

The secular realm of a person's life, pertaining to the physical and material domain, metaphorically belong to the "seven nations."

Yet it is precisely this realm that the Jew is called upon to conquer, elevating his every action by performing it solely for the sake of heaven.

"You are thieves!" the world cries out against the Jew. "How dare you conquer the domain of the seven nations and blur the distinction between religious observance and the mundane?"

To which the Jew replies, "All of creation belongs to G-d." Every realm of existence is part of Divine plan and can be made holy.

Indeed, such is the mission of every Jew -- to transform wherever he may be into a spiritual Land of Israel.

Judaism demands that we sanctify even the lowest aspects of the material world, thereby imbuing all of creation with holiness and demonstrating the unity of the One Creator.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. XX

The Shabbat Man

By Shimon Posner

Some called him Reverend Abrahamson. Others called him Cantor. My father called him Chazzan and bristled at the other names: evidently those other names were too cold and distant to identify our Chazzan. However you would call him, Chazzan Abrahamson was the oldest person I knew, at least he seemed that way, with a small, pure-white moustache and a head of snow-white hair to match.

He was small and walked with slow, deliberate steps. His wife would always walk with him to synagogue, even Friday nights when no other women came for services. She was prim but more quick-footed and I sensed even then that she was somehow protecting him.

He was from Europe, with genteel, old-world manners. Delicate and compact in speech and deed and presumably in thought also, he was unfailingly polite. A yekke, such people were called in the old country.

He wore an old-style cantor's hat, black, silken, rising six inches above the head and crowned with a somber pom-pom which bemused me even then. He draped his tallit gently over his shoulders.

None of us children had much to do with him. Nor do I remember many adults having much conversation with him beyond respectful salutation.

He would stand on the platform in front of the Ark when the Torah was being taken out. He led the congregation in the Shema, reciting each word forcefully, precisely, dramatically and finishing off the sacred phrase with a flourish: Echad! Looking back, I can now identify what I noticed then: there was also a controlled emotion.

A number of years ago, I heard that he had been a diamond cutter when he first came to Nashville from the old country, arriving in the Twenties, I believe. He

was looking for work and even with a sharp eye for stones and the steady hand of youth he had a hard time landing a job. Finally someone made him an offer. He would work eleven hours a day, six days a week, Sunday off.

But I don't work on Shabbat, the then-young man protested. If you don't work Shabbat, replied the only person who had offered him a job, then you don't work Monday. The genteel personality, so reminiscent of Western European finery, so appreciated in the South, looked at his would-be employer:

"I will die in the streets of hunger before I work on Shabbat."

It wasn't until decades later that he became Chazzan, cantor, of my father's synagogue. Personality, I guess, is only so deep, beneath that is primordial essence. When you're not hostage to your personality, the mores around you or anything else, then you can be true to your essence.

The Chazzan passed on nearly twenty-five years ago. Many a Shabbat it is I who now stand before the congregation and the Ark, holding the Torah and leading the Shema.

I hope that somehow, with something beyond me, I am conveying something more than the tune. Something the Chazzan conveyed without ever articulating it. That nicety should be a proper setting for the stone but never overpower it. That polish should enhance the metal, but never make you doubt the metal. That underneath it all must burn a fire and a passion of the spirit that niceties can never smother. That enveloped in a silken personality must be an iron will that in the face of multiplicity, division, even duplicity, the cry will ring clear, precise and dramatic: Hashem Echad! G-d is One.

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Dovid and Chanie Junik

SLICE OF LIFE

Kaddish at a Baseball Game

By John Yaakov Guterson



My Dad loved baseball games. At the ballpark, we would sit together, eating our peanuts, discussing each nuance of possibility. “Baseball is like poetry,” Dad would say, where innings become rhythms of pace and pause. Father and son, side by side, the diamond before us.

Dad would relish his one beer, after which a touch of foam inevitably appeared on his mustache. This always made me smile. Dad seemed to know everything before it happened: “Get ready for the hit and run!” or “Time to bring in the southpaw!” He rejected sitting too close to the field: “Higher seats give you better perspective, John.” Dad was a kid again, all smiles, excited, revved up. How I loved being with him at those games.

Kaddish. Kaddish is what one says when a parent passes. It is the Torah way. Saying the Kaddish prayer, like doing any mitzvah here in our physical world where the deceased no longer can,

has the extraordinary ability to lift the soul of the deceased higher and higher. As such, the experience of Kaddish is transcendent, a connection to G-d, and for me, a connection to my dear father, Mordechai Ber Guterson, OBM.

Kaddish is also something of a marathon: three times a day at shul for 11 straight months, leading the prayers, praying loud enough so that all can hear and follow. It takes breath, consistency, endurance, resilience. It takes a fastidious rearranging of work schedules and vacations. It takes honor and love.

And if you’re late to shul, by chance, then you’ve missed that moment to say Kaddish. Opportunity lost. I confess to some restless nights, fearful that I would oversleep. For obsessives, a perfect set-up.

Dad, I will not let you down. You and Mom brought me into this physical world; you raised me, made me who I am. I’ll be there.

And Dad, you lovingly wrote to me years ago that although you considered yourself to be a “non-believer,” you were at peace knowing that I would be your Kaddish. You wrote: “It’s always good to have an ace in the hole.” I embraced those words, Dad, like a soldier.

And so it was not by accident that at the end of my 11 months of Kaddish that I went to a baseball game. Celebrate my Dad. Pirates vs. Cardinals. My 10-year-old son and my son-in-law joined me, their presence as buffers for my emotions.

To say Kaddish one needs a minyan, a quorum of 10 men. In the Torah world, we are not alone. Needing nine Jewish men to join me, Rabbi Silverman came

to the rescue, as he had already organized a “Jewish college students night at the ballpark” for that very game.

Now, I can’t tell you the names of any of those college students who left their seats in the bottom of the first inning. I knew none of those young men who spared 15 minutes to stand near a 60-year-old, white-bearded son as he paid homage to his deceased father. But there they were—some knew Hebrew, some did not, but that didn’t matter. Simply being there was the key, the power of 10 Jews together.

For without all 10 of us, whether they understood fully or not, I would not have been able to say that last Kaddish, the culmination of 11 consistent months, of 990 minyans, of never missing once. And so, as the crowd roared in the background, those nine guys meant everything to me.

As I walked back to my seat, I realized how much my Dad would have loved the whole scene. I could feel him there with me, smiling, thanking me, loving me and then urging me to get back to my seat soon, not to miss another pitch. Tears welled up inside me as I took that walk, another goodbye to my father.

As I approached my seat, there was a 10-year-old boy, wrapped up in the moment, the thrill of a ballgame, pistachios in hand.

He looked up at me with a big smile on his face, and said: “Hi, Dad!”

Dr. John Yaakov Guterson received his medical degree from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He now resides in Pittsburgh, Pa., with his wife, Amy, where he works as a psychiatrist.

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The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely-translated excerpt from a letter by the Rebbe addressed to “the meeting committee for religious doctors of New York”

By the Grace of G-d

2nd Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, 5715 [June 21, 1955]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

It was with pleasure that I received the news about your meeting, whose purpose is to organize an association of religious doctors. If the assembly of G-d-fearing individuals is a positive thing at any time, how much more so is this the case in our generation, a generation deeply confused as a result of the convulsive events [it has experienced] which have brought about in many an utter disappointment in the false doctrines and ideologies they held and which have aroused them to embark on an earnest search for the truth.

An association of religious doctors can encourage this tendency by publicizing its views on several matters regarding which there is much error and confusion:

[As scientists:] to declare that true science, whose sole purpose is to learn the truth, cannot be in contradiction with our Torah, which is the “Torah

of truth.” On the contrary: the deeper science delves, the more it corroborates the principles, as well as the particulars, of our faith, the faith of Israel.

Specifically as doctors: to utterly refute the “materialist” school of thought, in light of the extent to which the health of the body is dependent upon the health of the soul. If in earlier times the medical adage stressed “a healthy soul in a healthy body,” in our day it has been recognized how much a slight flaw in the soul is the cause of a great flaw in the body; that the healthier the soul, the greater its control of the body and the greater its ability to repair the body’s deficiencies; that many physical remedies are far more effective and successful in healing the body if they are accompanied by a strong will and spiritual fortitude on the part of the one being healed.

This principle of the supremacy of spirit (quality) over matter (quantity) is also emphasized by the fact that even in regard to purely physical processes, the emerging consensus is that quantity is of limited significance. The things most vital to the functions of the body—the glands, the hormones they produce, the vitamins, etc.—are all of minute quantity.

Also note that [the verse declares], “From my own flesh, I perceive G-d”: from a recognition of the sovereignty of the soul over the body (the micro-universe is but a small step to recognizing the sovereignty of G-d over the world (the macro-body). In the words of our sages: “In the same way that the soul fills the body ... bears it ... sees but is not seen ... so does G-d fill the world ... bear it ... sees but is not seen.”

discover their own essence-core.

How could it be that darkness leads us to find a deeper light? That confusion leads us to find a deeper truth?

Only because the very act of existence was set from its beginning to know its own Author.

As it says, “In the beginning ... G-d said, ‘It shall become light!’”

Maamar V’nachah Alav 5725; Likkutei Sichot, vol. 10, pp. 7f

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat is known as “Shabbat Bereishit.” It is the Shabbat on which we read the very first portion of the first book of the Torah-- Bereishit.

The Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, used to say that “the position which we adopt on Shabbat Bereishit determines the nature of our conduct in the entire year to come.”

What does this mean and why is it so?

Shabbat Bereishit represents the transition from the holidays of the month of Tishrei to our regular, day-to-day life of the coming months.

Shabbat, in general, is known to elevate the spiritual service of the previous week. As Shabbat Bereishit follows the holidays of Sukkot and Simchat Torah--holidays which collect and internalize all the influences of the holiday-filled month of Tishrei--Shabbat Bereishit perfects and elevates the holidays of Tishrei.

In addition, Shabbat Bereishit is the Shabbat on which the upcoming month of Marcheshvan is blessed.

One of the reasons that the prefix “mar” is added to the Hebrew name of the month Cheshvan is that “mar” means bitter. The month of Cheshvan has no holidays and is therefore a “bitter” month, especially in comparison to the preceding, holiday-packed month of Tishrei.

Because Shabbat Bereishit has both of these two aspects--the culmination and elevation of the previous month and the blessing of the upcoming month--it has the potential to influence the entire year.

Thus, the position we adopt on Shabbat Bereishit has the potential to influence the entire year; it can bring the spiritual inspiration of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah into our regular, day-to-day living.

May we all have a very “successful” Shabbat Bereishit.

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.

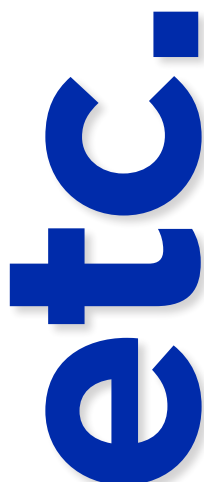


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Kosher Food in Ukraine



For the first time, FJC and Chabad’s Jewish Relief Network Ukraine (JRNU), has produced the majority of holiday items specifically in the country to support local businesses and manufacturing. Recently, a special facility has been certified kosher for the production of pure honey. Additionally, facilities for kosher meat and poultry, a variety of canned goods, and spreads have been certified.

In honor of the Jewish holidays large aid convoys departed, assisting the scattered Jewish communities in cities across Ukraine. Vast quantities of food products were delivered to Jewish centers, from which they are being distributed to community members through an organized and respectful system.

Teachings...

We are taught in the Midrash that G-d created the world as a “lower realm” – i.e., a realm initially devoid of Divine consciousness, and even opposed to it – intending that humanity fill the world with Divine consciousness. The tool that G-d gave humanity in order to enable it to perform this feat is the Torah.

The drama of creation thus required three elements: the world, the human race, and the Torah, serving respectively as the setting, the actors, and the script

MOSHIACH MATTERS

As impossible as it sounds, as absurd as it may seem: The mandate of darkness is to become light; the mandate of a busy, messy world is to find oneness.

We have proof: for the greater the darkness becomes and the greater the confusion of life, the deeper our souls reach inward to