

L'Chaim



When Dov Ber (later to be known as The Maggid of Mezritch) was a small child of five around the turn of the 18th century, his parents' home was consumed by fire. The child was upset by his mother's display of grief and he asked her: "Mother, is it right to grieve so much for the loss of our house?" "G-d forbid," she replied, "I am not grieving because of the loss of the house, but over the loss of the document of our family tree burnt in the fire. That document traced our descent to Rabbi Yochanan Hasandler who was a direct descendant of King David."

"If so," replied the child, "I shall start for you a new dynasty." In his seventy-odd years of service in this world, Dov Ber fulfilled the promise he made to his mother, becoming a remarkable Torah scholar and later assuming from the Baal Shem Tov (BeShT) the mantle of leadership of the growing Chasidic Movement

Like many of the Baal Shem Tov's sixty outstanding disciples Rabbi Dov Ber was won over to his master's controversial teachings in a profound and uniquely personal way. Once Rabbi Mendel of Bar, a leading disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, was staying next door to Rabbi Dov Ber. He happened to overhear the teachings of the "Maggid" and was fascinated by the explanations he heard. Stepping in to meet the teacher, he was shocked by the sickly appearance of the man. "Don't you know that there is a Baal Shem Tov? Go to him and he will cure you!" said Rabbi Mendel. The Maggid replied curtly with a quote from the Psalms, "It is better to take refuge in G-d than to trust in man!"

When Rabbi Mendel returned to Medzibozh he praised the Maggid but the Besht replied that he was already aware of him, and in fact, greatly desired that the Maggid come to him.

Over the course of the next few years the Maggid vacillated in his desire to meet with the Besht, but finally decided to travel to Medzibozh. Upon his arrival he expected to hear profound and wondrous expositions on the Torah, but instead the Besht regaled him with seemingly meaningless stories about coachmen and horses and similar themes. These stories were parables alluding to abstruse topics in Torah. Dov Ber was put off and decided to leave at once.

Just as he was about to leave, the Besht sent for him and questioned him, saying: "Are you well versed in Torah study?" Having received a positive answer, he continued, "Yes, I know that you are a scholar. Do you also know Kabbalah?" The Maggid replied that he did. With that the Baal Shem Tov questioned him on a passage, asking him to explicate it. When the Maggid presented his interpretation the Besht told him, "You don't understand it at all!" The Maggid reviewed the passage once more, and with assurance replied that it was certainly correct, and if not, he would like to hear a better explanation.

To that the Besht said: "Rise and stand!" As the Maggid gazed around him, the Baal Shem Tov interpreted the passage which referred to various angels. As he spoke the house was ablaze with light and the angels described in the passage were actually visible.

Over the course of perhaps two extended visits in Medzibozh the Maggid was able to absorb all the teachings of the Besht and take his place as the foremost disciple of the master.

In the tempestuous years following, the two spiritual geniuses were bound together in an extraordinary relationship of master and disciple. In the year 1760 when the Baal Shem Tov passed away, the Chasidic Movement was at a crucial juncture, requiring strong, dynamic leadership. The matter of succession was in question, as the Baal Shem Tov had left no specific instructions for his followers. In a move of respect and honor for the Besht, his only son Rabbi Tzvi was appointed interim leader. He served in that capacity for one year.

The disciples had gathered for the first yahrzeit of the Besht and were seated around a table with Rabbi Tzvi at their head. He had just concluded his Torah discourse when he rose and said: "Today my father appeared to me and informed me that the Shechinah and Heavenly Assembly that used to be with him 'have gone over this day to Rabbi Dov Ber; therefore my son, transfer to him the leadership in the presence of the Chevraya Kadisha (Holy Society). Let him sit in my place at the head of the table and you, my son, sit in his place.'" When he finished speaking he removed the white robe symbolizing his office and placed it upon the shoulders of Rabbi Dov Ber.

Thus, leadership passed to the Maggid. In a short time he was able to consolidate his leadership, and although some of the older chasidim did not become his disciples, he was ultimately recognized as the official successor and spokesman for the entire Chasidic Movement. The yahrzeit of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, is on the 19th of Kislev.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

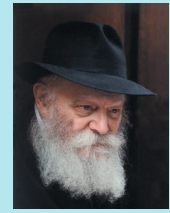
on the weekly Torah portion

And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth (Gen. 28:14)
G-d promised Jacob that the Jewish nation will be like the humble dust: Everyone treads upon it, but in the end, the dust has the last word and covers all. The Jewish people, after suffering at the hands of the nations of the world, will eventually be victorious and prevail. (Tzror Hamor)

Surely G-d is present in this place and I did not know it (28:16)
When does man feel the presence of G-d? When "I did not know it"--when the I is ignored and the person works on negating his own ego. (Panim Yafot)

Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and wives upon the camels (31:17)
When Jacob finally left Charan to return to Israel, he was a rich man with many possessions, though he had arrived there with neither silver, gold, nor cattle. Although at first glance it appears that Jacob's living amongst the idolators of Charan was a step backward, it was in this merit that he acquired his great wealth and established his family. So too, is it with this final Exile. Although the trials and tribulations have been many, when Moshiach comes and brings the Final Redemption, we will first realize the great advantage and good that came from it. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

And he lay down in that place (28:11)
Our rabbis teach that this was the first time Jacob lay his head down to sleep, having spent the previous 20 years working in Lavan's house, saying the entire book of Psalms each night. We learn from Jacob's behavior that even as we go about our daily lives and attend to our jobs and responsibilities, our "heads" should be concerned with Torah and our thoughts directed toward holy matters. (Likutei Sichot)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The accounts of our ancestors found in the Torah are not merely chronicles of Jewish history. Every part of the Torah is included to teach us how to worship G-d and conduct our lives.

This week's Torah portion, Vayeitzei, speaks of Jacob's departure from Israel to Charan. In Charan he worked for his Uncle Lavan for 20 years, married Rachel and Leah, and established the Twelve Tribes. Vayeitzei also relates his return from Charan to the Holy Land.

Jewish mysticism explains the difference between Jacob's departure to Charan and his triumphant return. After setting out on his journey, Jacob merited a personal revelation from G-d ("And behold, the L-rd stood above him"). The Torah describes the circumstances: "And he reached a certain place"--Jacob had to be in a particular place in order to receive the revelation, and then it was only in the form of a dream. But we find 20 years later, when Jacob was returning from Charan, "angels of G-d met him there"--the angels, and G-d Himself (as explained in the Zohar), actively went out and sought him. Furthermore, this time Jacob was awake and not dreaming.

We learn from Jacob's 20-year sojourn in Charan how much can be accomplished by "descent"-- by putting one's physical efforts into bringing holiness into the world. Every Jew must likewise "descend" into his own "Charan"--where he must wrestle with his own version of "Lavan the Aramean," and emerge victorious, having successfully elevated the sparks of holiness hidden in the physical world.

This is no easy task, and it requires much study and preparation. Before setting out into the world, a Jew must first ready himself in "the Holy Land," which symbolizes the highest level of holiness. Before a Jew can positively influence his surroundings, he must be sufficiently educated and knowledgeable in Torah. Before Jacob left Israel for Charan, he prepared himself by learning in the yeshiva of Eber for 14 years. Every Jew must likewise prepare himself by dedicating time to Torah study. This underscores the importance of a good Jewish education, and in particular, the necessity of beginning a child's Jewish education even before he is ready for formal schooling.

The theme of preparing oneself before embarking on life's journey is also expressed in a Jew's daily life. A Jew does not rely solely on his own power and talents, but rather, begins his day by praying and asking for G-d's help in carrying out his mission in this world.

By preparing ourselves properly before attending to our daily concerns, we are assured of success in both the spiritual and physical realms.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Israel: What Can We Do?

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

How can your heart not tear asunder seeing the horrific scenes in Israel? We haven't seen such chilling images since the Holocaust. What should be our response? What do we do with our outrage and anger? Maimonides writes that when a calamity strikes a community we must cry out, examine our lives and correct our ways. To say that the calamity is just the way of the world and a coincidence is cruel and insensitive. So what exactly can we do in face of our collective tragedy?

REBUILD ISRAEL

For us to regain power we must rebuild our holy land. We must build what our enemy seeks to destroy. "When one rises the other will fall:" When we build and fortify Israel — both physically and spiritually — the "other side" naturally falls. We must build an even greater edifice. Both physically — as in homes, synagogues, schools. As well as build up the spiritual land with study, prayer, charity and acts of goodness and kindness.

BASELESS LOVE

How do we rebuild the spiritual and physical land and its Holy Temple? Because the Temple was destroyed due to baseless hatred, and as long as we do not correct that we remain responsible for the continued state of destruction. Thus the clearest path to rebuilding is to create a groundswell of baseless love — to counter baseless hate — thereby eliminating the cause and thus

the effect of Israel's destruction. Indeed, we are taught that the Temple above is spiritually ready; all it needs is to descend below. And this is precipitated through our actions.

A LITTLE LIGHT DISPELS A LOT OF DARKNESS

Every mitzvah/good deed is an act of light dispelling darkness. We must increase in our acts of righteousness, goodness and kindness. And we must increase in charity. Giving charity proclaims loud and clear: we are here to change the world, to bring righteousness into the equation, to dispel the selfish darkness with our selfless light.

CHILDREN

In times of crisis we always gathered the children together and had them recite verses, say prayers and give charity. As King David writes in the Book of Psalms: [9] Mepi oililm v'yonkim yosadeto oiz l'hashbis oyeve u'misnakem — "Out of the mouth of babes and infants You have established Your might — to answer those who deny You, to silence the enemy and the vengeful."

Besides all the other benefits in doing this, your children will forever remember that we do not retreat in times of challenge. We stand up with pride and embrace our faith and our traditions.

Rabbi Simon Jacobson is the founder and dean of the Meaningful Life Center: www.meaningfullife.com

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In honor of
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4:14 Candle Lighting Time
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11 Kislev/Nov 24
Torah Portion Vayeitzei
Shabbat ends **5:16 pm**

SLICE OF LIFE

Jewish Determination

Meet Izzy Ezagui, a decorated squad commander in the Israel Defense Forces

By Shaindel Marcus



Izzy Ezagui, a decorated squad commander in the Israel Defense Forces, is the only soldier in the world who lost an arm in combat and returned to the battlefield. His story serves as an inspirational lesson to all of us. While he continues to serve in an elite unit in the reserves, Izzy delivers inspirational talks across the United States and internationally. The *Algemeiner Journal* included Izzy as one of 100 people positively influencing Jewish life.

Izzy relates: I grew up in Miami, and for my bar mitzvah, our family went to Israel, where I had the chance to see the land and meet Israeli soldiers. During that trip, we narrowly avoided the infamous Sbarro bombing in Jerusalem. We had just passed that intersection shortly beforehand.

I was sitting huddled with my family in the hotel room and watching the footage, and that was the first time that it dawned on me that I would want to participate in not allowing that to happen again.

When I was eighteen, I went back to Israel and met soldiers my age, essentially my peers, who were doing something very different than I was at that age.

That sense of purpose pushed me to follow through, and less than a year later, I joined the military. The idea of protecting the Jewish people was a compelling enough reason to take that leap.

Upon completing approximately nine and a half months of training during his service, his unit was granted a final weekend leave before being deployed as combat soldiers. During that particular weekend, conflict erupted on the Gaza border, prompting Ezagui's unit to be deployed to participate in what is known today as Operation Cast Lead.

"Our unit led a mission over the Gaza border to retrieve the body of a fallen comrade." That's when a direct mortar hit, resulting in the traumatic loss of his left and dominant arm.

Ezagui relates the sights and sounds of being rushed to the hospital on a gurney—the adrenaline rush, the surgery, and eventually waking up seeing his parents.

This would be the end for most, but for Izzy Ezagui this was only the beginning. After six months in the hospital, Ezagui decided to trade-in heavy painkillers for phantom pain for his old rifle. Ezagui knew he must go back to the IDF. He says, "The first thing I said when I woke up was that I intended to continue my role with combat."

When his parents heard that he wanted to return, they reacted differently. His father was furious. He asked how he could wish to return to where this happened to him. On the other hand, his mother supported him in returning to battle and doing what he felt was right.

Ezagui saw one bottom line from both reactions. They both had faith in his ability and believed he could return to the battlefield. He believed in himself because

his parents believed in him. He took that strength and trained like never before. With determination, he passed all the required tests for the IDF, including shooting, reloading guns, throwing grenades, unjamming firearms, charging hills, climbing ropes, and doing pushups. He returned to his position as a sharpshooter and became the only one-handed soldier to return to duty after a traumatic injury.

Ezagui originally joined the IDF ideologically to protect the Jewish people, his people. However, the second time was different. He returned to the army because he knew that if something like this happened to him, it was for a reason, and he had to find it.

He realized that if he went back, he would be able to inspire other soldiers and show that anything is possible if you are committed. In another sense, he felt that going back would undo the damage of what had happened. If he could do what he did before and after his injury, it's almost as if it had not happened.

Ezagui says, "As soon as I was back in combat, there were full days that I forgot I had an injury. It was just me again, and I was whole."

This mindset helps him in civilian life as well since he does not see himself as disabled, nor do those around him.

Today, Ezagui is back again, fighting for his people. He has been part of the war effort in Gaza, fighting with absolute determination to restore the safety and security to the people and land of Israel.

As frightened as he was to return, Ezagui claims he did not need much push. He says, "None of us have the luxury of sitting this out. Our enemies won't allow us."

Izzy Ezagui is an accomplished public speaker and author and can be reached at www.justizzy.com

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The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

"In immediate relationship with the Torah"

By the Grace of G-d

Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av 5733

Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

Our contact has been on matters of a higher level, or, in Chabad language—"inward" matters. To me, as I hope also to you, this means a continuous contact, even during intervals between correspondence, for where there is a meeting of minds and thoughts, the contact transcends time and distance.

This being the case, and since my thoughts are with you, I want to share with you, I want to share with you in a matter that has preoccupied my mind in recent weeks, namely, the inadequacy of attention given to the chinuch [education] of children of pre-bar (-bas) mitzvah age, down to the very little ones. Even in circles where serious attention is given to older boys and girls, there is a prevalent tendency to take the chinuch of the little ones more lightly.

This attitude is rather surprising, for the Torah has quite strong views on the role of the youngsters. Suffice it to cite the rule laid down by our Sages that as soon as a child begins to speak, his father must begin to teach him Torah, specifically the verse "The

Torah which Mosheh commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob" (Deut. 33:4). At first glance, there is a very long way between a two-year-old toddler, just beginning to speak, and the Torah which Moshe Rabbenu received at Sinai when he was 80-odd years old and at the height of his greatness. Yet, this is precisely what the Rabbis had in mind: to put this toddler in immediate relationship with the Torah which Mosheh received at Sinai. So much so that the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, begins the Laws of Torah Study in his *Shulchan Aruch* [Code of Jewish Law] with this very rule laid down by our Sages.

In view of the above, I have addressed two special messages to pre-bar (-bas) mitzvah children, as per enclosed copies, which I trust you will find illuminating.

Needless to say, I am certain that you will not suspect me of an indirect appeal for money. For, as you know, it is our understanding that your priority is specifically bound up with Miami, whence the voice of Torah will hopefully reverberate to the far corners of the earth. What I am after, and I make no secret about it, is the children: "Give me the persons" – in this case, the children: to me, of course, but to Torah, in accordance with the moment which Jews recite twice daily: "And you shall teach (words of Torah) diligently unto your children" – talmidim, school children.

With blessing for hatzlacha [success] in all your activities, both general and personal, aided by zechus horabim [public support], and looking forward to hearing good news from you at all times.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

On the 14th of the month of Kislev, we celebrate the wedding anniversary of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Their wedding took place, amidst much rejoicing, in Warsaw, Poland. However, the Rebbe's parents, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson were not in attendance, as the Russian government did not permit them to travel to Poland for their eldest son's wedding. They, however, prepared a celebration and wedding feast in their town of Dniepropetrovsk, which was attended by many in the Jewish community. Their celebration lasted until the wee hours of the morning.

Before the chupa, the Previous Rebbe delivered an intricate Chasidic discourse. He began the discourse by explaining why he had woven teachings of all the previous Rebbes into his discourse. He said: "It is well-known that at the time of a wedding celebration, the souls of ancestors of the couple from three generations back come from the World of Truth to attend the simcha. There are times, however, when ancestors from generations even further back come. As a way of inviting the souls of the righteous ancestors of our holy Rebbes, so that they should come to the chupa to bless the young couple, we will say a Chasidic discourse which contains a Torah thought from the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Chabad Rebbe]; from the Mittlerer Rebbe [Rabbi Dov Ber]; from my great grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek; from my grandfather -- the great-grandfather of the bride -- the Rebbe Maharash; from the great-grandfather of the groom; from the great-grandfather of the bride; and my father [the Rebbe Rashab]..."

The Rebbe proceeded to deliver the Chasidic discourse entitled, "Come my Beloved to greet the bride."

May we very soon merit the ultimate wedding of G-d and the Jewish people, with the revelation of Moshiach. At that time, we will hear the Torah thoughts of our ancestors and great Sages of previous generations not through others, but they themselves will teach us!

Shmuel Beiman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה'י מושקא

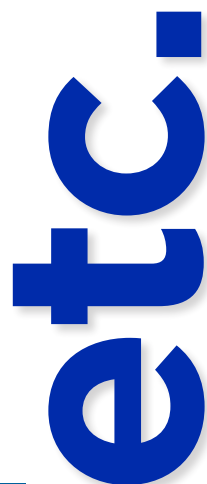
The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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International Conference in New York Brings Together Over 6000 Chabad Emissaries



Representing the full spectrum of Jewish communities, over 6000 ChabadLubavitch emissaries and lay leaders arrived earlier this month in the Big Apple to attend the International Conference of Chabad Emissaries (known also as the Kinus Hashluchim). They draw from sprawling cities and remote areas in all 50 U.S. states and more than 100 countries, from Alaska to Zambia and from New Orleans to New Zealand, shared inspiration, best practices, strategized and supported each other, during this fraught time. At the forefront of this year's conference, the 40th year it is being held, is the tragedy in Israel, and exploring more ways to support the people of Israel, as well as strengthen Jewish pride at home

Teachings...

Man should ponder thoughtfully how great are the kindnesses of the Creator: Such a puny insignificant being, Man, can bring great delight to the "Greatest of all great" of Whom it is written, "There is no delving into His greatness."

Man ought therefore always be inspired, and perform his avoda with an eager heart and spirit.

Hayom Yom