



IT HAPPENED ONCE

In 1812, Napoleon invaded Russia, and the route of the invasion led through White Russia. Rabbi Schneur Zalman, leader of the Chasidic movement in White Russia, who had twice been accused of high treason, turned out to be a most loyal patriot. Although the French conqueror was hailed in some religious Jewish quarters as the harbinger of a new era of political and economic freedom, Rabbi Schneur Zalman saw in Napoleon a threat to basic religious principles and spiritual values.

The Rebbe had nothing but contempt for the man whose arrogance and lust for power knew no bounds, and who represented to the Chabad leader the antithesis of humility and holiness. The Rebbe urged his numerous followers to help the Russian war effort against the invaders in every possible way. With the aid of his followers behind the enemy lines, some of whom were employed by the French Military Command, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was also able to render valuable intelligence service to the Russian generals at the front.

When the French armies approached Liadi, the Russian generals advised Rabbi Schneur Zalman to flee. In August (1812) the Rebbe hastily left Liadi, leaving everything behind, and fled with his family towards Smolensk. For some five months Rabbi Schneur Zalman and his family suffered the hardships and perils of the road and of an unusually inclement winter, until they reached a village in the district of Kursk. Here the Rabbi succumbed to a severe illness in the final stages of the harrowing journey, and passed away at the age of sixty-eight.

Traditions and records preserved in the family of Rabbi Schneur Zalman provide interesting details in connection with the Rebbe's last and fateful journey. From an account by Rabbi Nachum, grandson of the Rebbe, relating his personal experiences, we learn the following details:

It was on Friday, the 29th of Menachem Av that the Rebbe fled from Liadi on the advice of the generals commanding the Russian armies in that area. Sixty wagons were put at his disposal, but they were not enough, and many had to walk on foot. A number of armed troops were assigned to accompany and protect the caravan. In view of the rapid advance of the French army, the generals suggested that the best route for the flight of the Rebbe would be through the town of Bayev. But the Rebbe decided to head for Krasna, urging the caravan to make the utmost haste, in order to cross the river Dnieper at the earliest possible time.

After covering a distance of about two miles, the Rebbe suddenly requested the accompanying troops to let him go back to Liozna. Arriving at his deserted house, he ordered his men to search the house carefully to make sure that nothing whatever, however trivial, had been overlooked. The only things found were a pair of worn-out slippers, a rolling pin and a sieve, which had been left in the attic. He ordered these to be taken along, and to set the house on fire before the enemy arrived, first removing the sacred Torah scrolls from the adjacent synagogue. Then he blessed those of the townspeople who remained in the town, and speedily departed again.

No sooner had he left the town on the road leading to the Dnieper than the avant-courier of Napoleon's army reached the town from the opposite end. Presently, Napoleon himself with his entourage entered the town on their galloping steeds. Napoleon inquired after the house of the Rebbe, but when he reached it, he found it ablaze, the fire burning beyond control. Napoleon wished to have something which belonged to the Rebbe and offered a rich reward to anyone who could bring him anything. But nothing was there. [It seems that Napoleon practiced some sort of sorcery for which such an object was required.]

During all his long and arduous journey Rabbi Schneur Zalman kept in touch with the situation of Russian Jewry caught in the gigantic Franco-Russian war. The retreating Russian armies, using the scorched earth policy in order to deprive the enemy of vitally needed supplies, exacted a tremendous sacrifice from its own people. At the same time the invading armies plundered everything they could lay

their hands on. Starvation and ruination were the order of the day, and the Rebbe's heart went out to his suffering brethren, who were the most hard-hit victims of the invasion.

The Rebbe had foreseen Napoleon's invasion of Moscow as well as his defeat there. He also predicted that Napoleon's final defeat would be at the hands of his own compatriots. At the same time he knew that the retreating French armies, starving and desperate, would plunder the Jewish communities which lay in their path. Arriving in Piena, the Rebbe embarked upon a relief campaign to aid the Jewish victims of the war, including resettlement plans, fund raising, and relief distribution. For ten days after his arrival in Piena the Rebbe worked feverishly on his plans and projects to alleviate the plight of his brethren. Then, he fell ill, his condition worsening day to day. At the conclusion of Shabbat he composed a letter full of mystical allusions, and a few minutes later he returned his soul to his Maker.

From Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Kehot Publication Society

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians (Ex.6:6)

It is far easier to physically take the Jews out of galut (exile) than it is to remove the inner galut from within every Jew. (Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka)

But the wheat and millet were not smitten (Ex. 9:32)

Why didn't G-d destroy the millet and the wheat along with the rest of the crops in the field when He sent the plague of hail? The answer is that Pharaoh had to have at least something left to lose. A threat is only effective when something dear is being threatened. Had Pharaoh's land been totally decimated by the hail, he would not have been motivated to heed any further warnings issued by Moses. (Yad Yosef)

These are Aaron and Moses...These are Moses and Aaron (Ex. 6:26, 27)

Aaron, the first kohen (priest), embodied the proper worship of G-d, and by extension, symbolizes prayer in general. The job of the kohanim was to offer the sacrifices in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; in our time, when we have no Temple, prayer must take the place of these sacrifices.

Moses, on the other hand, epitomized and symbolized Torah learning.

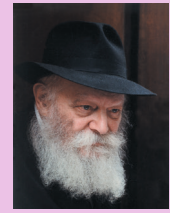
The juxtaposition of the two names and their repetition in the reverse order teaches us that there are times in our daily lives when one aspect takes precedence over the other. Sometimes we stress prayer, as a preparation for performing mitzvot and learning Torah, and sometimes we learn first in order to pray more effectively. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)



4:46 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
24 Tevet / January 24
Torah Portion Va'eira
Shabbat ends 5:49 pm

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

One of the main reasons that the Exodus from Egypt occupies such a central role in Judaism (we mention it daily in our prayers) is that this original exodus symbolizes the daily spiritual exodus which must take place in the life of a Jew. The Hebrew word for Egypt, "Mitzrayim," comes from the root word "Meitzar," meaning limitations and obstacles. It is up to every individual to liberate himself from his own internal limitations and boundaries, thus freeing his G-dly soul to express itself and seek spiritual fulfillment.

This week's Torah portion, Va'eira, tells of the very beginning of the events which led up to the Jews' triumphant liberation from bondage. By studying the circumstances of the Egyptian exodus, we see how we can apply these lessons to our own personal and spiritual journey as well.

The first plague to afflict the Egyptians was blood; every drop of water in the land was affected. Therefore, the first step toward spiritual liberation must also somehow be connected with transforming "water" into "blood."

Water symbolizes tranquility, coldness, and lack of emotional excitement. Blood, on the other hand, is a symbol of warmth, enthusiasm and fervor. The Torah asks every Jew: Do you truly want to leave "Egypt," to overcome your self-imposed limitations? The first thing you must do is turn your "water" into "blood." Transform your apathy and inertia into enthusiasm and love of Torah and mitzvot. Infuse your life with a warmth and fervor directed toward G-d and holiness.

A person may claim, "Is it not enough that I simply perform the mitzvot, learn Torah, and avoid that which is forbidden? Am I not a good Jew even if I don't feel any enthusiasm for what I do?"

Chasidic philosophy explains that coldness and apathy are the source of all evil. When one is cool toward something, it means that he is totally uninterested in it. We see that when something truly close to the heart is mentioned, our pulse quickens and we "warm" to the subject. Coldness signals the mechanical performance of the commandments and leads to eventual spiritual deterioration.

The first action to be taken toward spiritual liberation is to replace our lukewarm dedication to Judaism with warmth and enthusiasm. We should be at least as equally enthused about Judaism as we are about other facets of our lives.

One of the practical ways this expresses itself is when we perform a mitzva in a particularly nice way. The desire to enhance our observance leads to our observing the precepts of Judaism out of love. This, then, is the first step towards going out of our own personal Egypt and ending our collective exile.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Walls

By Yanki Tauber

A common conception is that human creativity, particularly artistic creativity, will flourish only under conditions of unbridled freedom.

The history of man's attempt to evoke beauty and meaning with the materials of life has shown the very opposite to be the case: that "oppressive" circumstances have stimulated humanity's most profound and innovative creations, while conditions of unmitigated freedom yield lesser and shallower works. The challenge to reduce a landscape to a limited size is what makes a great painting; the need to express a thought with a limited number of words is what makes a great poem.

GALUT

The 613 commandments (mitzvot) of the Torah are a bridge by which mortal man achieves connection with his Creator. There are hundreds of mitzvot that can be observed only when the Holy Temple is standing in Jerusalem. Indeed, the Torah forbids their actual observance in our present circumstances.

So our current state of galut (exile) is much more than a physical displacement. Since the destruction of the Temple and our exile from the Holy Land, certain venues of connection with G-d have been closed to us.

THE POETRY OF PRAYER

The Talmud cites an interesting rule of etiquette governing guest-host relations: "Whatever the host instructs, you must do, except when he says 'Get out of my house.'"

Chasidic teaching applies this to our relationship with G-d: As "guests" in G-d's world we must

obey all that He instructs us to do—except when He banishes us from His presence.

So even as we submit to its decrees, we do not reconcile ourselves with the phenomenon of galut. When G-d commands, "Do this" or "Do not do this," we obey; yet we refuse to accept the galut per se, refuse to accept the closing of venues in our relationship with G-d.

And it is from this incessant struggle—from this unremitting tension between our acceptance of the curbs of galut and our striving to break free of them—that our most "creative" achievements in our relationship with G-d arise.

For example, the deeper significance of the korbanot (animal offerings) that were offered on the altar in the Holy Temple is that man should sublimate the "animal soul" within himself, refining his naturally self-oriented drives and desires. Today, we achieve this through prayer.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Daily we pray for and await the day that our lives will be freed from the confines of galut. Yet there is something very special about our present-day struggles and the unique potentials and achievements they exact from our souls.

To strain the bounds of galut, while taking care not to overstep these bounds; to conform to the will of G-d, while appreciating that it is G-d's desire that we contest His will whenever it dictates that we limit our connection with Him—this has yielded the most profound and innovative achievements in the divine art of life.

Based on the Rebbe's talks on Sukkot 5751 (1990) and on other occasions.

SLICE OF LIFE

Exodus of an Artist



Ukrainian-born painter Michael Gleizer's journey from the Soviet Union to America tells a new story about art, freedom, and faith

In the winter of 1985, Michael Gleizer was working as a librarian. At nights and in spare moments stolen from his young family, he painted the images that had made him a pariah in the Soviet art world—a bride and groom standing beneath a wedding canopy, a woman circling the flames of the Shabbat candles with her hands. They were never exhibited.

A painter and illustrator whose work the art historian Mikhail German once compared “emotionally and plastically to the bitter poetry of Marc Chagall, Sholem Aleichem, and Anatoly Kaplan,” Gleizer’s art is inextricably bound up with his strong Jewish identity—a bond would lead him on an unusual artistic journey.

In 1993, at the age of forty-seven, Gleizer immigrated to America with his family. Having lived the first half of his life without the freedom to practice his faith, “America gave me an opportunity to freely plunge into religious life,” he says. “I felt how Jewish spirituality is close to me, to my soul.” The artist settled in Mill Basin, Brooklyn, and began attending synagogue regularly.

In the decades that followed, he produced a large and diverse oeuvre that spanned graphic arts, costume design, and an endless array of neo-impressionistic oil paintings.

MENACHEM MENDEL IN THE SHTETL

Born into an observant Jewish family in Kyiv

in 1946, Gleizer grew up without synagogues, Jewish schools, or kosher food. Nevertheless he maintained a strong Jewish identity, speaking—and reading—Yiddish at home.

Stories of Tevye, a traditional dairy farmer burdened by poverty and a bevy of independent-minded daughters (later adapted in America by Joseph Stein as *Fiddler on the Roof*), were among the few sanctioned expressions of Judaism in the Soviet Union. For Gleizer, Sholem Aleichem’s wry, humorous stories bore the full weight of his Jewish identity, an identity bound up with a sense of loss.

Still, Gleizer managed to convey some of the humor, and the subversive undertones in these stories. His painting “Menachem-Mendel in Shtetl” depicts the classic archetype of the unlucky shlemiel. Here he is seen teetering on a diagonal dressed in a fancy cream-colored overcoat and shoes adorned with spats. He carries a little satchel, no doubt filled with false promises that will fuel the misadventures of the naive Tevye.

Gleizer’s budding career was quickly cut short when, after Israel’s Six-Day War in 1967, the Soviet government launched an anti-Israel media campaign. In 1973 all Jewish art was banned.

Reflecting on that time, the artist recollected: “All hopes and dreams are in vain. The gates will always remain shut for you if you are a Jew.”

NEW SPACE FOR GRIEF

Beneath Tevye’s dry humor, of course, is a current of anguish, and as the Soviet Union tumbled toward dissolution in 1991, Gleizer was finally able to reckon with the darker realities of Jewish life in Ukraine and Europe.

His nine-panel “Babi Yar” commemorates the largest mass murder of Jews by the Nazis during the war against the Soviet Union. Among the 33,771 Jews murdered in this ravine near Kyiv on September 29–30, 1941, were some of Gleizer’s relatives. Yet memorials erected on the site by the Soviets commemorated only “peaceful victims of fascism,” without mentioning Jews. Gleizer’s massive painting breaks new artistic ground, presenting hundreds of indistinct figures struggling to free themselves in the mire of a fog-filled landscape under three horizontal registers of cold, relentless sky.

But even as he grieved the past, Gleizer was confronting the future. Perhaps unwilling to uproot his family, he had remained in Russia as many of his fellow Jewish artists fled.

BREAKDANCING REBBES

Familiar with Gleizer’s work from his Soviet years, Zev Markowitz, director of the Chassidic Art Institute formally invited Gleizer to exhibit in his Crown Heights, Brooklyn, gallery in 1991. Gleizer moved to New York that year. His work has been exhibited multiple times at the gallery since.

In an absolute expression of joy and freedom, Gleizer’s images in New York blossom with men in prayer shawls. A series of four paintings, “Synagogue” (1993), finds eighteen Jews adorned in tallit and tefillin, milling around a shul, a scene unheard of in Gleizer’s former life. Perhaps the most notable assertion of Jewish practice is “770” (1994), depicting over sixty men in an odd moment after the morning services at the Chabad-Lubavitch headquarters, caught in a moment of random community that expresses a deeply felt freedom to be individuals, unified by Jewish faith and practice. The choice of subject was not accidental. Gleizer had rented a studio in Crown Heights, opposite the Chai Gallery, where he worked every day for twenty-five years.

But what is truly unique in Gleizer’s later works is a delicacy of touch and sense of humor rare in Jewish art. His ability to see beyond clichés and find the vibrant soul of Jewish practice informs a pair of Chasidim in “Dancing” (2003). While their oversize black hats and suits are straight out of central casting, it is the totally unique crouching steps and twisting gait that transform them into breakdancing rebbes.

Gleizer’s Jewish art is one strand of many in a lifetime of artistic output. Yet his Jewish sensibility can be seen in almost everything he produced, he says: “I always present in [my paintings] Jewish elements, whether in the Soviet Union or the USA.” Gleizer’s early experience with Soviet religious and artistic oppression—and subsequent liberation—presents an alternative to widely held beliefs about the incompatibility of faith and art. At the same time the struggle to develop and preserve his Jewish identity under duress has led to a deeper awareness of what he shares with all people.

“Even when painting Jews, I strive to express qualities and problems common to all human beings,” he says. “The deeply national develops into something universal.”

Excerpts from an article by Richard McBee.

This article appears in the Fall/Winter 2024 issue of *Lubavitch International*, to subscribe to the magazine, please visit www.Lubavitch.com.

CUSTOMS

What is included in the “Bible”?

The Bible is called Tanach in Hebrew, an acronym for Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and C’Tuvim (Writings). The Torah covers the period from the creation of the world to the death of Moses. The Prophets contains eight books—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. The third part of the Bible, C’Tuvim—or Sacred Writings—contains Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nechemia and Chronicles. Scripture is another name for the Bible.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The following is a freely-translated excerpt from a letter by the Rebbe dated 24 Adar II, 5711 (March 8, 1951).

... I was extremely happy to read that you are working with your artistic talents, are preparing to hold an exhibition, and that you have already received favorable reviews in the press. Surely you will progress in the utilization of the talent that G-d has granted you toward the strengthening of Yiddishkeit and G-d-fearing behavior.

As to the main point of your letter, in which you complain about your circumstances, your depression, your despair, etc., and express the wish that we should meet, so that we could discuss the matter face to face.

For two good friends to get together is always a positive thing and a spiritual pleasure for them both. But to put off [the resolution of your problem] until then, and in the meantime to remain in a state of despair, G-d forbid—who can allow himself such a thing?

You do not write of the causes which bring you to this state of mind, so I cannot go into their details to show you how these “causes” are but imaginary and stem from the evil inclination—that is, that even if there is some substance to them, the fact that they lead to despair and depression is folly...

I must therefore confine myself to a general comment with which I hope to illuminate your particular situation. My comment is based on the saying by the Baal Shem Tov—which my father-in-law, the Rebbe, would often repeat—that a person can derive a lesson in the service of G-d from everything he sees or hears about.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

If Israel will keep just one Shabbat properly, Moshiach will come immediately. “Though I have set a limit

As you are surely aware, the primary talent of an artist is his ability to step away from the externalities of the thing and, disregarding its outer form, gaze into its innerness and perceive its essence, and to be able to convey this in his painting. Thus the object is revealed as it has never before been seen, since its inner content was obscured by secondary things. The artist exposes the essence of the thing he portrays, causing the one who looks at the painting to perceive it in another, truer light, and to realize that his prior perception was deficient.

And this is one of the foundations of man’s service of his Creator.

As we know from the Torah—and particularly from the teaching of Chassidism—the entirety of creation stems from the word of G-d,[2] and the word of G-d is what brings it into existence and sustains it in every moment of time. It is only that the divine power of tzimtzum (constriction) holds the divine life-force in a state of concealment and obscurity, and we perceive only its outer form (i.e., the physical reality).

Our mission in life—based on the simple faith that “there is none else beside Him”[3]—is that we should approach everything in life from this perspective. That we should each strive to reveal, as much as possible, the divine essence in every thing, and minimize, to the extent that we are able, its concealment by the externalities of creation...

So one must take great care that secondary and external matters should not obscure the essentials of life and its ultimate purpose.

A person might experience difficulties, trials and challenges in separating the good from the bad. But these are but the means by which to achieve the purpose of life—that his soul should elevate itself through its positive deeds in this world... So one must never allow the difficulties in overcoming one’s trials, or even the fact that one might occasionally fail and stumble, to overwhelm the joy that one must feel as a child of G-d...

to ‘the end,’ that it will happen in its time regardless of whether they will do teshuva or not... the scion of David will come if they keep just one Shabbat, because Shabbat is equal to all the mitzvot.

(*Shemot Rabba*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L’Chaim Publication.

From the Archives

The Hebrew date of 24 Tevet (coinciding with Friday, January 24 this year). It is the yartzeit of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s works incorporated the whole spectrum of Jewish thought. The philosophical system he created is a synthesis of the mystical and revealed aspects of Judaism. But Rabbi Schneur Zalman was not “merely” a cold, analytic scholar, as the following story reveals.

Once, Rabbi Dov Ber, Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s son, was studying late at night, his infant son in a cradle nearby. Rabbi Dov Ber was so immersed in his studies that when the baby fell out of the cradle he did not hear the child cry. Rabbi Schneur Zalman was also studying in another part of the house. But he heard his grandson’s cry and quickly went to pick him up.

“You must always hear the cry of a child,” Rabbi Schneur Zalman rebuked his son.

This simple admonition is like the rallying cry of all of Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s descendants and followers since then. Rabbi Schneur Zalman devoted his life to hearing the cry of every child—regardless of his chronological age. Indeed, within each one of us there is a child crying out to his Father in Heaven, waiting to be picked up, brought close. Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s teachings, especially his main work, the *Tanya*, were written to help enable one to achieve that very closeness.

Shmuel Butman

L’ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

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

Chairman: Rabbi David Raskin
Director: Rabbi Shmuel Butman
Publishing Director: Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
Program Director: Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
Secretary: Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
Administrator: Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
Layout: Rivky Laifer
Associate Editor: David Y. B. Kaufmann
Chairman Editorial Comm.: Rabbi Nissen Mangel
Rebbe photo: S. Roumani

L’Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard. All contents © 2024 by L.Y.O. ISSN 1050 0480
L’Chaim Subscriptions: For a one year subscription send \$55, payable to LYO (\$60 elsewhere) to: L’Chaim, 1408 President St., Bklyn, NY, 11213
Learn about Moshiah: Visit www.moshiah.com or call (718) 953 6100



Uplifting Winter Camp Experience Inspires Young Shluchim



On the beautiful campgrounds of Glendale, California, Every year - Yaldei Hashluchim - the children of Chabad

emissaries from around the world, gather together in person for a week of rejuvenation. The camp serves Young Shluchim - boys and girls - who live outside of established Jewish communities and don’t get to experience year-round what many other Jewish children take for granted.

Recently as the buses pulled away from the picturesque campgrounds, and the children were returning from the Young Children Winter Camp, a sense of renewed energy was palpable.

Throughout the week, the camp’s programming reinforced the core values of love and acceptance of each and every Jew, and instilled a deep sense of pride and responsibility in the campers. “Our goal is to create an environment where the young Shluchim can recharge, connect, and draw strength for their vital mission,” says Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, Executive Director of Merkos 302 and Chairman of MyShlich.