

L'Chaim

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תר"י ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"May there be peace in your wall, tranquility in your palaces" (Psalm 122:6) Year of Unity - Hakhel



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Ki Tavo*, begins with the commandment of *Bikurim*, bringing the first fruits of the seven species of the Land of Israel to G-d. The first fruits were brought to the Temple, received by the *Kohen* (priest) and placed next to the altar. When giving it to the *Kohen*, the person made a declaration referencing that our ancestor Jacob was saved from Laban, and that the Jewish people were saved from the Egyptians.

There were other great salvations that G-d did for the Jewish people. Why specifically are these two events part of the *Bikurim*?

About *Bikurim*, the Torah says, "It will be, when you come to the land... and you take possession of it and settle it." Rashi explains that bringing *Bikurim* is required only after conquering and dividing the land of Israel. In other words, once they took up permanent residence and began enjoying the bounty of the land they were obligated to bring *Bikurim*.

There are two other mentions of permanent residence: The 20 years Jacob lived with Laban, and the 210 years the Jews lived in Egypt. But in those cases, we didn't get to enjoy the bounty of the land. Thus, we mention them in the *Bikurim* declaration to show how grateful we are that we can enjoy the bounty in contrast to the times when we couldn't.

On a deeper level, the fruit refers to the soul as it is Above; when brought as *Bikurim* it refers to the soul within the body. The idea of bringing *Bikurim* is to strengthen the bond between the soul and its source Above. When we bring *Bikurim* (the first and the best), like with any offering, we bring ourselves closer. And when we recite the declaration, verbalizing our gratitude to G-d, we draw down the first and the best part (the "*Bikurim*") of the soul.

This will give us a deeper understanding of the words of the declaration. The two events mentioned, Jacob with Laban and the exile in Egypt, both begin with a descent, being drawn down from the highest state of holiness into the lowest places. But the descent is followed by an ascent, being elevated to the highest level, and in the case of Egypt, to the point that G-d revealed Himself to us at Mount Sinai.

The point of drawing down from the highest and holiest into the lowest, is to affect it and make it ready for G-d to be able to dwell there openly as well. This is the idea of *Bikurim*, to make working the land a holy endeavor, by drawing down G-dliness into the mundane work we do. And of course, we will reap the fruits of our labor, turning our mundane efforts into the first and the best for G-d.

It is not enough to bring ourselves closer to G-d through our study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvas* (commandments), but we must also draw G-dliness down into the mundane, daily activities that we do, until they become holy as well.

We will reap the fruits of our labor when we merit the ultimate revelation with the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Farming Sunshine

The idea of harnessing solar energy has been around for decades.

In Israel, they've been using solar energy to heat water since the 1950s.

Solar panels on homes help bring down electric bills.

And German, Dutch and Southern California-based companies are producing electric vehicles that can harness the sun's power to provide 15-45 additional miles on a clear day.

Transforming sunlight into electricity is not only an engineering challenge, it is also a metaphor, one that Chasidic teachings began using and developing 200 years ago. The transforming-sunlight-to-energy metaphor provides insight into our spiritual nature.

Our purpose, the performance of *mitzvos* (commandments), is to transform the world - to make it a dwelling place for G-dliness. The electricity entering our homes, transmitted through wires, outlets and then electric cords, powers our dishwashers, air-conditioning and computers, transforming our houses into places of comfort and production.

Similarly, we should direct our spiritual energy - the electricity of our souls - to transforming the realm of human relationships and awareness of the Divine. As Maimonides writes in his code of Jewish law, regarding the times of Moshiach, that then there will be neither jealousy nor greed, neither war nor famine. In other words, relations between individuals and between nations will be harmonious,

and for each other's mutual benefit.

Also in the times of Moshiach, all humanity will direct its attention to the "knowledge of G-dliness." We will focus not on accumulating things or statistics but on deepening our awareness of and appreciation of G-d's Presence in the physical world.

But how do we achieve this? Whence our spiritual "electricity" which becomes ours - ours to use, and our responsibility to use to transform the world? Following the analogy, from some form of spiritual sunlight.

What is this "sunlight"? Well, what do we mean when we say someone "enlightens" us, or they "light up our life"? We mean they inspire us, reveal to us something about ourselves we weren't aware of, provide direction and guidance in how best to actualize our potential.

Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that on the 18th of Elul, twelve days before Rosh Hashana, we celebrate the birthday of two luminaries of the Jewish world - the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chasidism in general, and Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chasidism in particular. (Indeed, the Alter Rebbe's first name means "two lights.")

So the sunlight is shining. We have within ourselves the spiritual photovoltaic cells to gather this spiritual sunlight and transform it into spiritual energy with which to transform the physical world into a dwelling place for G-dliness. All we need do is harvest it, to tend the solar farm of our souls.

Adapted from an article by Dr. David YB Kaufmann, obm

SLICE OF LIFE

Happy Campers!



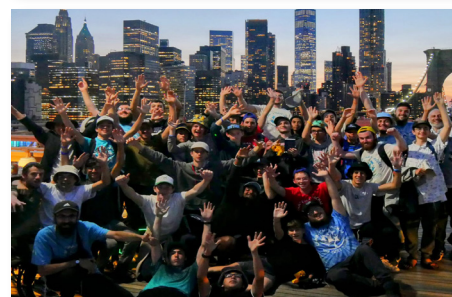
Photos: Above Odessa – one of 35 specially organized camps where children are being provided with counseling for trauma from the on-going war. Clockwise from top left, Wausau, Wisconsin; Ottawa, Canada; a Hakhel gathering of 650 campers from seven CGIs in NW London, England; JGR-Greenbush, NY; Aruba; Kyiv, Ukraine; L'Maan Achai-Andes, NY; Hadera, Israel.

There are hundreds of them around the world, with tens of thousands of campers. When the sun is at its zenith in every major city and on every continent, the Chabad-Lubavitch Gan Israel (CGI) summer camps shine their light on another generation of Jewish children.

The Gan Israel camps span a diversity of cultures, languages and regions, extending from Alaska to Florida and from Australia to Zaire. But no matter how disparate they are, all alike in their trademark spirit, joy and Jewish pride that permeate the Gan Israel camp experience.

In 1956, the Rebbe launched Gan Israel, an international network of summer camps, where children of all ages and walks of life learn to love their heritage while enjoying the best experience that camping offers.

In those days, enjoying a summer camp complete with sports, arts, crafts, and entertaining activities was a novelty reserved for children of families with means. When Gan Israel summer day and overnight camps were founded, the guiding principle was that every child deserves to gain



from the integration of education and camp activities and that no child should be left out.

Gan Israel has grown into the world's largest network of Jewish summer camps. Typical activities such as swimming and sports, as well more specialized



activities like science workshops, tennis, karate, and dance, all complement the spiritual programs that are the hallmark of Gan Israel: Jewish songs and creative Shabbat parties, ritual arts and crafts, and a variety of programs designed to generate interest and excitement in Jewish life and mitzva observance.

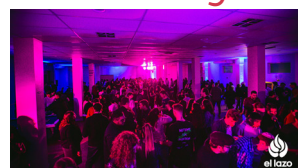


Vitebsk Synagogue Restored

Hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the inauguration of the Chabad Synagogue in the heart of **Vitebsk, Belarus**. The event marked the completion of the grand building restored in honor of 100 years since the synagogue's original establishment.



1500 Young Jewish Professionals



Beit Jabad Palermo in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**, brought together Young Jewish Professionals from Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and other parts of Argentina at a special Shabbat 1500 weekend encounter.

Hakhel – Unite!

People do not like to feel “left out of the action.” When a person sees another person running and “grabbing” an opportunity, they usually join in as well. They also start running and grabbing, as they feel that if they do not get involved now, there will be nothing left for them. This is the way that the activities of “Hakhel” should be done in the month of Elul. It should be done with such excitement and enthusiasm that others will join in and realize that they must “grab” the last opportunity to receive the tremendous blessings associated with being involved in the activities of Hakhel (Seifer HaSichot 5748)



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated and adapted 18 Elul, 5736 (1976)

The month of Elul, as is well known, is the month of honest self-assessment of the outgoing year, and, at the same time, the month of preparation for the new year—which is, clearly, also the purpose of the honest stock-taking; i.e. not only to try to make good one's deficiencies, but also to know, and to resolve with proper determination, the right path of future daily conduct henceforth. And this will make the coming year a good and sweet one spiritually, hence also a good and sweet year materially.

In the month of Elul itself, the 18th (Chai) Elul comes as a special reminder, with encouragement and exhortation, in the said two aspects of self-assessment and preparation. Its message is: With this day begins the last 12 days of the year; hence the self-searching must now be more intensive and embrace all the months of the year - each day corresponding to a month, the start being Chai Elul. Moreover, according to our Rebbes, the day of Chai Elul must infuse vitality (*chai*-life) into all details of the Divine service of the entire month of Elul and in its two general aspects of assessment and preparation.

One may wonder what has "vitality" to do with such a thing as an honest self-assessment which deals with "hard" facts. The connection is as follows: There is the well-known instruction that just as one must not forget one's shortcomings in order to rectify them fully, so must one not forget one's good qualities, in order to utilize them to the fullest degree.

In order that this should be accomplished in the proper way—and to the greatest possible degree—the assessment must be done with real vitality.

Whereas an honest assessment of one's shortcomings might sometimes induce dis-

couragement, or worse, despair, an honest evaluation of one's achievements might lead to complacency and to the conclusion that one has already attained a state of perfection.

However, the sign and effectiveness of vitality is in growth, and not the growth of a vegetable, which remains in the same place (and situation), but of a living creature—moving from one place to a better place. Growth is indicated not only by changing location, but also by growing through personal change, a change in one's nature, habits and entire being from good to better and better still.

This is the true vitality of Jew who has been commanded to refine and change his character attributes.

The capacity to attain all the above has been given to every Jew, or, using the quotation above, to "all of you," from "the heads of your tribes" to "the hewer of your wood and the drawer of your water."

For the vitality of every Jew derives from, and is bound up with, the Source of Life, as is written, "And you who are attached to G-d, your G-d, are all of you living this day—by virtue of your attachment to G-dliness, the Source of life and vitality, through the Torah, the Torah of Life, and the Mitzvoth (commandments) whereby Jews live.

Moreover, it is a matter of common experience that everything done with vivacity can be achieved with greater success and more completeness. And—what is no less important—such activity makes the proper impact on others inspiring them with the same spirit, for the best influence is a living example.

May G-d grant, that everyone, man and woman, take full advantage of the great opportunity of the last days of the year and those following, all the days of the coming year—to act with true vitality in fullest measure, as above.

And in the merit of it everyone, in the midst of all our Jewish people, should be inscribed for a good and sweet year, for good life and for peace,

Unto the coming of our Righteous Moshiach, and the fulfillment of the divine prophecy: "The strength and glory of the Righteous shall be uplifted," very soon indeed.

curses are directed at the Evil Inclination, as the Torah states several chapters later (*Deut. 30:7*): "And the L-rd your G-d will place all these denunciations upon your enemies, and on those who hate you." This will reach its culmination in the Messianic era, when "I will cause the impure spirit to depart from the land." At that time, all of Israel's enemies, both within and without, will be destroyed. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This coming Monday is the 18th of Elul, which is a festive day on the Chasidic calendar; for it is the birthday of the founder of Chasidut in general, Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov and the founder of Chabad Chasidut in particular, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the Alter Rebbe).

The birthday of a Tzadik, a righteous person, has a strong connection and a profound effect on the month in which the birthday occurs. The number 18 is written out with the Hebrew letters which spell the word "chai," meaning "alive."

Chasidut adds life and vitality to the observance of Torah and mitzvot. Thus, the month of Elul in which the birthdays of these two great Tzadikim takes place gains extra vitality and strength. And the special theme of that particular month also gains vitality.

The special service of Elul, the additional prayers, charity, and Torah study are all enlivened with an extra measure of vitality. By studying the teachings and the ways of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe we can approach our service to G-d with greater enthusiasm.

The month of Elul is a time of reflection. We know where we came from, what our past contained. The question now is, where are we going? How is the approaching year going to be different from the year that is coming to a close?

One way we can assure that the year will be different is by taking the "chai," the life and liveliness of Elul with us throughout the year. By adding spirit, joy, enthusiasm and "chai-ut" to our mitzvot and Jewish studies, we will surely hasten the time of a return to life and eternal life that we all await, for ourselves and our loved ones, in the Messianic Era.

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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MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Torah portion of *Ki Tavo* contains a section known as the "Reproof"—punishments that will be inflicted on Israel if they do not obey G-d. On a deeper level, however, these



IT HAPPENED ONCE

It happened once that some Chasidim of the Baal Shem Tov were sitting together. The longer they shared their stories and insights and sang their Chasidic melodies, the stronger their desire to be with the Baal Shem Tov grew, till they impulsively decided to hire a horse and wagon and set out for the Baal Shem Tov's town of Mezhibozh.

Their own *shtetl* was actually quite a distance from Mezhibozh; even if they traveled non-stop for several days, there was only a small chance they might make it before Shabbat. The wagon driver was less than enthusiastic; as far as he was concerned there was no need to hurry, and in his opinion, it was simply not possible to cover that many miles before sundown on Friday. The roads were very bad, he pointed out, and there were always unexpected obstacles and delays while traveling.

But the Chasidim could not be deterred. Logical considerations could not compete with their intense longing to see their Rebbe. Without further ado they were on their way.

The wagon driver soon had the horses at a gallop, running as fast as they could under the circumstances. The roads were very narrow, wide enough for only one vehicle. They were so narrow, in fact, that if another vehicle were to appear, passing it on either side would be impossible.

As the Chasidim reached a fork in the road, at an intersection where another path joined the main thoroughfare, an elegant carriage suddenly pulled out in front of them. It was the carriage of the local *poritz* (landowner), and he was clearly in no hurry to go anywhere. At a leisurely pace his carriage ambled down the road, blocking all traffic. The Chasidim were now stuck behind it, reduced to a crawl.

The wagon driver gritted his teeth; even the Chasidim were becoming angry. The tiny chance they had to make it to Mezhibozh in time for Shabbat was rapidly evaporating before their eyes.

One Chasid was more upset than the others. "I can't believe it!" he complained. "After all our efforts, how can something so ridiculous spoil our plans? Just because of this slowpoke we're going to miss out on spending Shabbat with the Baal Shem Tov!"

Another Chasid, however, hastened to calm him down. "My dear brother, how can you say such a thing? Why are you worried? Have you forgotten what our master the Baal Shem Tov has taught us, that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, directly supervises every minute detail in the world, and that a leaf doesn't turn in the wind without Divine Providence? Does it not state in the Torah, 'From Him no evil will descend'? Nothing bad can come from on High, and indeed, everything is for the good. Whatever G-d does is only good and for the best. The more we accustom ourselves to thinking and acting accordingly, the more we will merit to see the good that exists in everything openly revealed. How can it be that this basic principle should be forgotten when it comes to actually implementing it in our own lives? I tell you friend, this is only a trial..."

The Chasid's fervent plea entered the hearts of the others, and their impatience disappeared. Their wagon could still only proceed at a sluggish pace, but they were filled with renewed faith and confidence that the unexpected delay was for the best.

The wagon continued over the next few miles until suddenly, another potential problem appeared on the horizon. All the way up ahead, at the next intersection, they could see a group of drunken peasants waiting to pounce on the first wagon that passed by...

There was no doubt what the drunken peasants would have done to the Chasidim if they had been alone on the road, or traveling ahead of the *poritz's* carriage. No one would have stood up for the Jews or sought justice for them after the fact. They would have simply received the "usual" treatment drunken peasants knew so well how to mete out. The Chasidim would have been grateful to have escaped with their lives, let alone continue on their journey.

As it turned out, however, because the *poritz's* carriage was hogging the right of way,

the hooligans simply dispersed once they saw whom it contained. By the time the Chasidim reached the intersection they had all slunk away and the danger was over.

A few minutes later the *poritz's* carriage turned off onto a side road, and the main thoroughfare was suddenly clear. With a crack of the whip the horses were again at a gallop, and the Chasidim made it to Mezhibozh before Shabbat—with plenty of time to spare.

From this incident we learn that even something that doesn't appear to be good at first, may in fact be so in reality.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And you shall go to the place which the L-rd your G-d will choose to place His name there (Deut. 26:2)
 A Jew does not travel the face of the earth of his own volition; Divine Providence leads him from place to place for the sole purpose of "placing His name there" — sanctifying the name of G-d in that particular place. (*Hayom Yom*)

Blessed will you be in the city, and blessed will you be in the field (Deut. 28:3)
 A city has certain advantages over rural life, among them the pleasure of others' company and the availability of places of Torah and learning. Rural life also has its advantages, such as a more relaxed life-style, fresher air, and warmer relationships between neighbors. G-d's blessing is that we should be equally blessed in both locales. (*Chatam Sofer*)

Because you did not serve the L-rd your G-d with joy and gladness of heart...therefore will you serve your enemies (Deut. 28:47-48)
 Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, would cite this verse to underscore the importance of serving G-d in a happy and joyful manner. Doing so brings joy to G-d Himself, as it were, and has the power to nullify all decrees.

In the morning you will say, "Would that it were evening!" And in the evening you will say, "Would that it were morning!" (Deut. 28:67)
 The early Chasidim interpreted this "curse" as impetus along the path of self-improvement: When you wake up in the morning and consider the quality of your G-dly service, you will pine for the superior level of the night before. In the evening, when assessing the day's spiritual progress, you will find that you have descended even further, and hope to return to that morning's level...



7:10 Candle Lighting Time
 NY Metro Area
15 Elul/Sept 1
 Torah Portion *Ki Tavo*
 Ethics Chs 3 & 4
 Shabbat ends **8:08 pm**

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