

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Re'eh*, begins with the continuation of Moses' words to the Jewish people before his passing: "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse." Thus G-d spoke to the Jewish people through Moses.

Jewish philosophical teachings explain that G-d is all good. How then can we understand this verse? What does it mean that G-d gives a curse?

The question is further compounded because in this instance; G-d refers to Himself as "*Anochi*." *Anochi* means "I." It is not a name of G-d. When G-d refers to himself as "*Anochi*" He is referring to His essence, greater than any of His names. How is it possible that the essence of G-d be connected to a curse?

Targum Yonatan translates the word "curse" (*klolo*) as "it's exchange," (*chilufa*). In other words there is a blessing and then something other. Similar but different.

There are different kinds of blessings. There are superficial blessings, the ones we all see; basic pleasures we recognize as good. Then there is a deeper good that comes into the world through difficulty and suffering. We don't see them as blessings at the onset, however with time we recognize how they are truly blessings.

Many times, it's the suffering that brings the greatest amount of change in the world.

So the verse could be understood like this:

"Behold I give before you a revealed blessing and a concealed blessing."

Anochi, G-d's essence, then, is only connected to blessing—different kinds of blessing.

Unfortunately, no one is free from suffering. Recognizing that all of life's challenges are from G-d will keep you positive, as you will be filled with a sense of deep purpose knowing that your struggle is making a difference.

May G-d send clear, open revealed blessing. There is no need for suffering anymore. We are all ready for Moshiach to come. May it happen now!

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.

Stop the Litter

Every metropolitan city has its own unique character and flavor. Paris, for instance, is known for Louvre Museum, the Eiffel Tower and for being a cultural city. New York City, the Big Apple, is New York is known for its towering skyscrapers, famous districts, and endless energy. It is also infamous for its dirty streets and sidewalks, more like the discarded core of the apple rather than the shiny piece of fruit itself.

Children drop candy wrappers, drivers throw trash out the window and home owners and apartment dwellers alike leave old appliances on the sidewalk.

The *Talmud* tells the following story about litter:

A man was clearing the stones and rocks from his field. They were disturbing the growth of his produce. But, rather than disposing of the stones in a suitable area, he just did what was easiest for him: he threw them out onto the path in front of his property.

Passing by one day, as the landowner was clearing his field, was an old man who called out: "Oy, you fool! What are you doing? Why are you throwing stones from a place that isn't yours onto a place that is yours?!"

The landowner stopped his work for a moment and looked at who was speaking to him. Then he laughed and said, "You are the fool! What are you saying? The opposite is true. I am throwing stones from my land onto public property!"

The old man shook his head and passed by. Throughout the rest of the day, the field owner would

remember the conversation of earlier in the day and break out in laughter. As he continued clearing his field and throwing stones onto the path, he thought of the stupidity of that passerby.

Not too long afterward, the landowner found himself burdened with a huge debt. In order to pay it, he had to sell his field after which he had to hire himself out as a laborer.

One day, as he was walking home from work, he began reminiscing about the good old days. Since he was not concentrating on the path in front of him, he tripped over a rock in the path and landed flat on his face! He just about managed to lift his bruised and aching body from the ground when he looked up and noticed where he was.

"Why, I'm right in front of my old fields," the once-proud landowner said aloud. And the stone that I just tripped over is undoubtedly one of the stones I threw out to clear my field so long ago! How right that old man was. This field from which I threw out stones is truly not mine any longer! And the path onto which I threw the stones belongs to me as it belongs to every person who passes over it. I myself caused this accident!"

Of course, no one would trip over a candy wrapper, a cigarette butt or food packaging littering the sidewalk. But like many stories from the *Talmud*, it can give us pause to consider how to live a more considerate and communally responsible life.

SLICE OF LIFE

Four Chairs and Tefilin by Rishe Deitsch



Ever wonder why things just aren't working out? I often do. Only to realize later that actually they did work out, just not the way little me thought would be best. (Fortunately, I'm not running the world.)

When we made the move from one Florida condo to another, I inexplicably took along four big chairs. It made no sense, because the owner of the new place was leaving us a dinette set with eight chairs. Recently I realized that these big unwieldy chairs on squeaky wheels were taking up too much space and rolling around the apartment getting in people's way and they just had to go. I tried asking nearby friends and relatives; nobody wanted them. I tried not to get insulted. I mean, they were in excellent condition!

There was a sign in the building about a dumpster and used furniture but I didn't

understand from the sign what was and wasn't welcome in the dumpster. (In New York it's easy. You don't want it? Put it outside. Inside of an hour it has new owners, no matter what "it" is.)

A friend told me the Breast Cancer Foundation takes donations of used furniture and we made an appointment for pickup. They came, saw the chairs, and said they can't take them because they're on the second floor. Wait, you knew that! So why did you come?? Finally, today, I got fed up with these big chairs rolling around and all my attempts to unload them and I went to the office and asked the person behind the desk what to do. She told me definitely not to put them on the sidewalk like I would in New York. Then she suggested I put up a sign on the bulletin board in the mail room.

I did that, at 3:00 p.m. Before 4:00 p.m. there was a knock on my door. A man named Danny was willing to give the chairs a good home (as per my sign). And then, of course, my husband, Avrohom Moshe, asked him, "Are you Jewish?" He replied that he was not. Oh well. And then, as an afterthought, he said, "My grandmother was, but I am not."

Which grandmother?

Maternal.

"Danny, you are as Jewish as Moses," said my husband, "and how about putting on tefillin now?"

Danny had never heard of tefillin. As I watched Danny repeat after my husband the blessing on tefilin and *Shema Yisrael*, it occurred to me that maybe this is why I had to bring those chairs from the other apartment, and all my efforts to unload them hadn't worked out. This had to happen—Danny had to graduate from being a *karkafta delo manach tefillin*.*

Then we started to talk. Danny told us that

his maternal grandmother had been an adult living in France during the Holocaust. She survived—but, heartbroken and horrified after the War, she renounced all religion. She said to G-d, "If this is how You protect your chosen people, turning blind to this horror and deaf to our desperate prayers..." then she wanted nothing to do with G-d. She married a non-Jew and had Danny's mother, and they settled in Havana, Cuba. Danny's mother was raised with a fear of religion and she resolved to stay far away from Judaism because being Jewish was dangerous.

Danny's mother married a Catholic. After moving to Venezuela, they had two sons, first Josef, then two years later Danny. When Danny was 13, his father abandoned the family, never to be heard from again. When Danny was 16, his mother passed away. Luckily, she had taught him piano and he had a diploma to prove it, which he took door to door, asking for piano students. He found students and in this way he was able to support himself; Josef worked as an electrician.

Hearing Danny play piano is like being in the room where angels are singing. Danny credits his mother, saying, "Every time someone likes my playing, they compliment my mother as well for I am the product of her talent, love, and dedication."

Danny left Venezuela and came to this country. He lived his whole life thinking he was a Catholic. He is turning 70 and only today found out he is Jewish. Welcome home, Danny.

**A karkafta delo manach tefillin is a man who has never put on tefillin in his life, which has ramifications both in this world and the next.*

Rishe Deitsch is the senior editor of the N'shei Chabad Newsletter. She could have been a great musician also, but she didn't practice... Reprinted with permission from the N'shei Chabad Newsletter

Eighth Unity Torah Completed

In the historic Tzemach Tzedek synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem, the eighth Children's Torah scroll was completed. The final letters were inscribed at a unique ceremony at the Western Wall on Monday, 20 Av—anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, the Rebbe's father. The campaign to unite Jewish children through acquiring a letter in a special Children's Torah Scroll was initiated by the Rebbe in the spring of 1981. Since then, over 2,000,000 Jewish children have united through this project!

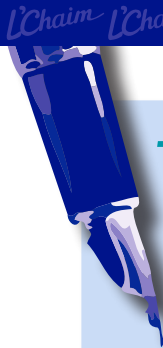
New Center

Rabbi Shmaya and Hadassa Hecht have established the Chabad Jewish Center of **Oxford, Connecticut**. The Chabad Jewish Center of Oxford will host Shabbat and holiday celebrations, Hebrew school, adult education classes, cultural events and social gatherings. The new center is the ninth center in the Greater New Haven area.

Hakhel – Unite

Hakhel and the writing of a Torah are commandments that stress the unity of the Jewish people. Hakhel encompasses all Jews "men, women, children and proselytes"—equally. Indeed, that is why this commandment is termed Hakhel, which means "congregation." In this case, those who congregate lose their individual identity and form an entirely new totality. Writing a Torah scroll, too, stresses the concept of unity, for while Jews differ greatly in their comprehension of Torah, all are equal with regard to writing a Torah scroll. (*The Chasidic Dimension, Based on Likkutei Sichos Vol. XIX, pp. 298-304*)





The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Rebbe's response to a mother who wrote concerning her son who had joined a cult

25th of Av, 5740 [1980]

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of July 30th, in which you write about your youngest son.

Considering the seriousness of the situation, I am confident that you will not rest content with what has been done in this matter until now, and will intensify your efforts, both by your husband and yourself, as well as through enlisting the aid of friends, to do everything possible to prevent the tragedy. For, when it comes to a Jewish heart, one never knows what and how will come the moment of truth and proper response.

If you will let me know the Jewish names of all the members of your family for whom you request a blessing, together with their mother's Jewish name, as is customary, I will remember each and all of you in prayer.

It is my duty to call your attention to the following, which I trust you will accept in the spirit it is offered:

All the members of a Jewish family constitute one organism, and when one part of it needs special treatment, it can be done in one of two ways: either directly, if possible, or indirectly, through strengthening the other parts of the body, particularly those that govern the functions of the entire organism. Applying this illustration to the present case, it is well to bear in mind that the head of the family is called *Baal Habayis* [head of the home], and the wife is called *Akeres*

Habayis [mainstay of the home], corresponding to the heart of the family. Thus, strengthening the commitment to the Torah and *Mitzvoth* [commandments] on the part of the parents has a beneficial effect upon all the members of the family in the same direction. Of course, it may sometimes entail certain difficulties by having to make some changes, perhaps even radical changes, in regard to habits and lifestyle, etc., but on the other hand, considering the far-reaching benefits, and especially the fact that parents surely would not consider anything too difficult if it can be beneficial to their children, of what significance can any difficulty be, especially as in most cases these are often exaggerated. In any case, a Jew is always required and expected to live up to G-d's Will; how much more so when a special Divine blessing is needed.

All the members of a Jewish family constitute one organism, and when one part of it needs special treatment, it can be done in one of two ways...

At the same time, there is the assurance that however the everyday life and conduct was in the past, a Jew can always start a new life through *Teshuva* (which literally means "return" to one's essence).

As we are about to enter the month of Elul, you surely know of the Jewish custom that from the beginning of the month of Elul, Jews wish one another a happy new year. I will, therefore, conclude with prayerful wishes to you and all your family for a truly Happy New Year, and may G-d grant that even before Rosh Hashono you should have good news to report to this effect.

With blessing,

MOSHIACH MATTERS



"The blessing, if (*asher*) you will hearken to the commandments... and the curse, if you will not hearken." (*Deut. 11:27-28*) The Hebrew word the Torah uses in relation to

the blessing, "*asher*," is more correctly translated "when." When you obey My commandments, G-d promises, this is the blessing that you will receive. By contrast, the "if" of "if you will not hearken" implies that the curse need not happen at all. Only the blessing is a sure thing, for we know that in the End of Days, all Jews will return to G-d and observe His mitzvot. (*Panim Yafot*)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Don't we all want something out of life. Each of us has his or her own hopes for the future, and our own individual plans on how to achieve them. Throughout our lives we try to acquire wisdom, improve our inner character, and fulfill our obligations to G-d and our fellow man. And, like any other goal, it's necessary to occasionally take time out to assess our progress. Are we really on the right track? Is there something we can correct or eliminate?

To meet this need, G-d gives us an entire month each year before Rosh Hashana—the month of Elul—for introspection and self-improvement. Putting our lives under the microscope and honestly taking stock enables us to greet the coming year head on and ensure that it be one of spiritual advancement.

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, used the analogy of "the king in the field" to describe the month of Elul. For 11 months of the year the king is ensconced in his palace, surrounded by guards, isolated and remote from the common man. In Elul, however, the king goes out to the countryside to greet his constituents, and everyone is permitted to approach him with his personal requests.

In Elul, G-d is close to the Jew, and this proximity is felt by all of us. Even if we lack the spiritual vocabulary to articulate it, we all experience a spiritual arousal at this time of year—an inexplicable urge to change and improve ourselves. Furthermore, G-d grants us special powers during Elul to succeed where we might have failed before. He wants us to do better, and helps us fulfill our resolutions for good.

May we all utilize these days of Elul wisely, and take advantage of the unique opportunity for growth it contains.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

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



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IT HAPPENED ONCE

In a village, not far from Kovna, there lived a G-d-fearing, Jewish innkeeper. He would have been quite happy, except that his daughter Sarah was of marriageable age, and the chances of finding her a worthy husband in this distant village were scarce. However, the innkeeper put his trust in G-d.

Sarah, who was very attractive, helped her parents at the inn. One day, the young son of the country squire chanced to pass by the inn. The moment his eyes fell on Sarah, he liked her. He called on her to serve him one drink after another, and the more he drank, the more he liked her. When he was pretty well drunk, he said to her, "Will you marry me?"

Sarah ignored his marriage proposal. But when he kept on telling her that he was serious, she told him, politely but firmly, that she was Jewish and would never marry out of her faith. For his part, the young squire said that he would return and insisted that he would definitely marry her.

When the young squire returned home and told his father that he intended to marry the innkeeper's daughter, the old nobleman could not believe his ears. Though the father tried to dissuade his son, the young man remained adamant. The squire, who had pampered his spoiled son all his life and catered to all his whims, once more gave in. But on one condition: the girl had to convert.

Happily, the young squire raced back to the inn and told Sarah the "good" news that his father had consented to the marriage. There was, of course, the small matter of conversion, but once done, she would live a life of luxury.

Sarah was horrified. She told the young squire that she would never marry him under any circumstances and ran from the room. She decided not to say anything to her father in the hope that this was a passing whim.

The young squire was used to getting what he wanted. Like his son, the old squire's pride was hurt to think that a poor Jewish girl was turning down the marriage proposal of an elegant and handsome nobleman! The old nobleman sat down at his desk to write a letter to the innkeeper.

In the letter, the squire stated that his son had graciously consented to marry the innkeeper's daughter. If the innkeeper refused, the lease on his inn would be revoked, all rent owed would be due and the innkeeper and his family would be driven off the estates forever.

The young squire rushed to deliver the letter with a few of his friends. En-route, a tremendous rainstorm broke out and they were soaked to the bone. They stopped at the closest inn until the storm subsided. At the inn, the boisterous company began drinking and offered a round of toasts to the young squire. "Drink," they said. "Once you marry that pretty Jewish girl, the innkeeper's daughter Sarah, you will have to behave..." Laughter followed.

All this time, a middle-aged man sat quietly reading a book. He was Rabbi Yosef, the teacher of the two sons of the innkeeper from this small village. His ears soon caught the boisterous conversation of the company and the mention of Sarah, the daughter of the neighboring innkeeper. He listened intently as the young squire read out loud the letter from his father to Sarah's father.

When the young squires fell into a drunken sleep, Rabbi Yosef closed his book and traveled quickly to the next village where he immediately alerted Sarah's father as to the situation at hand.

"Rabbi Yosef," Sarah's father moaned, "What is your advice?" "Sarah must get married immediately. There is no time to wait." "But with whom will she go to the chupa? There is not one Jewish man of marriageable age in this village," the innkeeper lamented.

"In that case, there is no other way," the teacher said. "Please understand, I would never dream of making such a proposal. I am not young man, I am a widower, and Sarah deserves someone worthier. But, as a temporary arrangement, I am prepared to be the groom. Of course, once the danger is over, we will go to the rabbi and arrange for a proper divorce."

The innkeeper was filled with gratitude to Rabbi Yosef, who realized the danger he was getting into. The innkeeper asked Sarah what she thought.

"What can I say, father? Rabbi Yosef is ready to risk his life for us. I do not know if I have a right to accept such a sacrifice," she replied.

"Then, all is settled," said Rabbi Yosef. "We have no time to lose."

All of the Jews in the village were awakened and asked to prepare something for the wedding feast. The following morning when the young squire and his companions arrived at the inn, they were amazed to find that they came right in the middle of the wedding feast.

"What welcome guests!" the innkeeper called to the new arrivals. The young squire was flabbergasted. He had come too late; Sarah was already married. He and his friends quickly left.

Rabbi Yosef stood up. "My friends," he said, "we must be truly grateful to the One Above for this wonderful salvation. We celebrated this wedding to save Sarah from a calamity. Now that the danger has passed, I am ready to arrange for a divorce so that Sarah is free to marry the man of her choice."

The innkeeper once again thanked Rabbi Yosef for his selflessness and thanked the guests for their wonderful cooperation. "Well my daughter, remove your bridal veil, for we are going to the Rabbi," he said to Sarah.

"I am prepared to venture into town with my new husband, but not for a divorce," Sarah replied. "The fact that G-d has brought us together and made us husband and wife, I am sure this marriage was made in Heaven. I could not have chosen a more devoted and loyal partner, who risked his life for me!"

Shouts of "Mazal Tov!" rang out, and, "Now we can truly celebrate!"

The following year, Rabbi Yosef and Sarah were blessed with a son who grew up to be a great tzadik and wonderworker. He was known as the famous Rabbi Leib Sarah's, so called in honor of his pious mother Sarah.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse (Deut. 11:26)

"Behold" is in the singular tense, addressed to each of us as individuals. Whenever a Jew is faced with a decision and must choose the right path to follow, it doesn't matter what other people are doing. In fact, the majority is usually on the wrong track...(Gedolei HaMusal)

When you go over the Jordan and dwell in the land...He will give you rest from all your enemies round about, and you will dwell in safety (Deut. 12:10)

If G-d gives the Jews "rest from all their enemies," isn't it obvious that they will "dwell in safety"? The seeming repetition, however, contains valuable advice: If you truly wish to "rest from all your enemies," G-d counsels, you must "dwell in safety" within your own camp - in peace and brotherhood, without inner squabbling and political strife. Declared our Sages: "Were Israel united into one group, no nation or tongue could rule over them." (G'ilei Zahav)

Lest your eye be evil against your needy brother...and he cry out to G-d against you, and it be a sin in you (Deut. 15:9)

Not helping another person in his time of need is bad enough, but looking down on him and blaming him for his own predicament is even worse. For if "he cries out to G-d against you," your own behavior will be carefully scrutinized, and your own sins and failings come to light... (Rabbi Shmelke of Nicholsburg)



7:41 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
24 Av/August 11
Torah Portion Re'eh
Ethics Ch 5
Blessing of the new month Elul
Shabbat ends 8:42 PM

In Loving Memory of
R' Raphael Ben R' Nissen Isaac A"H Andrusier
dedicated by
Yankie and Devorah Leah Andrusier and Family