

The year before the birth of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, the Baal Shem Tov knew that a new soul was soon to descend to this world. But who would be privileged to host it he did not know, so he searched for it in the heavenly palaces.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman's father, the saintly Reb Baruch, was one of the Baal Shem Tov's circle of hidden tzadikim. But no one knew of Reb Baruch's righteousness – no one, that is, apart from his wife Rebbetzin Rivka.

When a year had passed since their marriage and they had not been blessed with a child, Reb Baruch and his wife set out during the month of Elul to visit the Baal Shem Tov in order to ask for his blessing. The Baal Shem Tov blessed them and promised them that in the forthcoming year, 5505 (1745), they would be granted a healthy son.

The fact that this child was connected to the new soul that was destined to descend that year was hidden even from the Baal Shem Tov.

On Rosh Hashana of that year, the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov observed a marked difference from his accustomed mode of divine service. His abounding joy could be perceived in his manner of prayer, in the especially cordial tone with which he blessed them, in the Torah teachings at the meal thereafter, in the next day's sounding of the shofar, and in the additional prayer service.

The conclusion of Yom Kippur that year found the Baal Shem Tov in a distinctive state of holy elation, which remained with him until after Simchat Torah. His disciples understood that something wonderful must have transpired that holiday month, something that had brought him such joy that he had departed from his accustomed mode of divine service during the Days of Awe, for joy was now its dominant theme. But eager as they were to discover the reason for this joy, they were left disappointed.

Before Reb Baruch and his wife left Medzibozh, they called on the Baal Shem Tov to receive his farewell blessings. Rebbetzin Rivka, bestirred by spiritual emotion, told the tzadik that when the Almighty fulfilled his blessing and granted her a healthy son, she would dedicate him to the study of Torah and to divine service in the spirit of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

Seeing their state of spiritual arousal, the Baal Shem Tov gave them his blessing, and they left town with glad hearts.

On Wednesday morning, on the eighteenth of Elul, the Baal Shem Tov returned from his immersion in the mikva [ritual bath] in extraordinarily buoyant spirits. His disciples were mystified, but none of them ventured to breathe a question. Moreover, the tzadik personally led the prayers to the jovial rhythms of the festival melodies. And when he surprised them by omitting the penitential prayers, they realized that this must be a uniquely festive day.

He then invited them to share his visible joy at a festive meal, where he said: "On Wednesday, 'the day on which the luminaries were suspended in the heavens,' on the Wednesday of the week whose Haftarah opens with the words, 'Arise and shine,' on this day a new soul has come down, which will light up the world through the revealed levels of the Torah and through Chasidut. It will endure self-sacrifice for the sake of the spiritual path of Chasidut and will succeed in its mission until the coming of Moshiach."

When the Baal Shem Tov received Reb Baruch on Yom Kippur that year, he warned him that he should tell no one that he had had a son, nor should he tell anyone of the child's name. Later, when Reb Baruch was about to leave for home, the Baal Shem Tov gave him detailed instructions as to how the child should be attended to and how he should be taken out to the fields. He warned him solemnly, moreover, that the child should be kept out of public view, and in particular, out of the view of the local gossips.

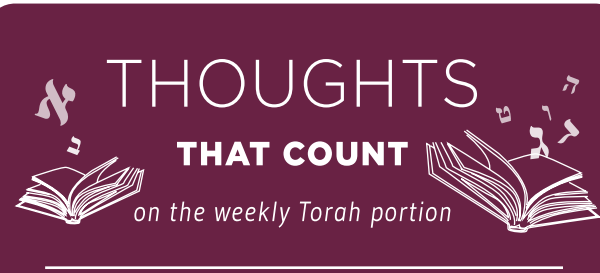
And three times a day, the Baal Shem Tov remembered the newborn child in his prayers.

On the child's third birthday, Rebbetzin Rivka and her sister-in-law arrived in Medzibozh for the child's third birthday, when it is customary to give the first haircut. As soon as the Baal Shem Tov had given the child his first training in leaving his peyot (side-curls) uncut and had given him his blessing, he urged them to leave immediately and not to discuss between themselves where they had been. Finally, he wished them a good year and a safe journey home.

The little boy kept on asking who was this man who had cut his hair and left him with peyot, and who had blessed him.

"That was a grandfather," replied his mother. Thus, Rabbi Shneur Zalman referred to the Baal Shem Tov in the future, as his spiritual grandfather.

Excerpted from Likutei Dibburim by the Previous Rebbe



**When you go out to wage war... G-d will deliver them into your hands and you will take captives ("shivyo") (Deut. 21:10)**

The literal meaning of the word "shivyo" is "his captives," implying that we shall regain the enemy's capture, i.e., that which the enemy captured from us in the past. One of the tasks of Moshiach in the early stages of his revelation is, in the words of Maimonides, "He will wage the battles of G-d and succeed." At the end of the Messianic battle, the Jewish people will find restored all the precious spoils that were taken by the nations during the exile, first and foremost among them the Holy Temple. (*The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Teitzei, 5750*)

**When you build a new house you shall make a parapet for your roof... if anyone fall from it (Deut. 22:8)**

When a couple marries and makes the transition from their parents' homes to their own, the need to earn a livelihood brings them into contact with many new things. They must therefore make a "parapet" beforehand, setting the proper limits and spiritual standards, to ensure that no harm comes from their involvement in worldly matters. (*The Rebbe*)

**You shall surely lift him up (Deut. 22:4)**

When a person helps his fellow Jew, he himself is thereby elevated. Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, wrote that when one does a spiritual favor for another, "his mind and heart are purified one thousand-fold"; his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, added that this is no exaggeration!

**Remember what Amalek did... how he met you by the way and smote the hindmost of you, all that were feeble (Deut. 25: 17-18)**

Amalek attacked only those Jews who had sinned and were expelled from the camp beyond the Clouds of Glory, thus no longer under their protection. From G-d's command, "Go out and wage war with Amalek," we see just how important it is to draw all Jews to Torah and Judaism, even those who are presently "outside the camp," in order to protect them from Amalek's assault. (*Likrat Shabbat*)



### 7:28 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
12 Elul/Aug 20  
Torah Portions Ki Teitzei  
Ethics Ch 1 & 2  
Shabbat ends 8:28 pm



### LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Ki Teitzei*, tells us: "If there is a quarrel between (two) men, who come to court to be judged, the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned."

In the Torah there is nothing extra. Here, however, there seems to be extra words. The verse starts, "If there is a quarrel," yet it could have started "men, who come to court..." Isn't it obvious that there is a dispute, when two men come to court?

The verse then continues, "the innocent one will be acquitted and the guilty one will be condemned." What other option is there? Isn't that what a court ought to do?

This is a special case. First the two men were quarreling, from the fighting a dispute arose. When they come to court the judges recognize that this case started as a quarrel. They might be tempted to deal with the true underlying issue instead of judging the case at hand. The Torah tells the court to judge the case properly.

There is a message here for us all. Don't think that quarreling with a friend is OK. Ultimately it will escalate and you will end up in court. Your case will not be judged according to your feelings but by the law.

We each need to think about our relationships. Is it really worth fighting with friends and family. How many of us haven't spoken to a friend or, even worse, a family member for a long time because of some petty matter?

Don't let it come to that. Whether you feel innocent or guilty in the situation, it's not worth the constant fighting, bickering and hurting.

Sometimes we lose focus, forgetting that G-d puts us in our situation. We start to feel negative about ourselves and everyone around us. Then the quarreling begins.

Practice recognizing G-d's hand in all that happens. It will keep you positive.

Life is short. Be positive and easy to get along with. Be a good friend and good family. Let the petty stuff slide. Be happy, friendly and smile a lot.

You will positively change the world for the good, and you will bring out the positive in those around you.

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.

### Filling Space

After spending more time at home these past 18 months, including many people working from home, it's no surprise that we're looking for home organization and storage overhauls. According to California Closets, pantries and clothing closets topped the list of areas where people want to use space more efficiently with an organized presentation.

Squeezing more in, though, isn't a new phenomena: How many absolute essentials does a woman place in her evening bag? How many items does a man load into his suit pocket and still have the jacket lay properly? How many grapes can a youngster pack into his mouth before they come tumbling out?

Sand patted down by a child in a pail, and patted down yet again to make room for more; a suitcase so full that you have to sit on it to close it; making the margins on a document more narrow so that everything fits on one page, having just one more slice of the chocolate mud cake even though we're full beyond comfort.

People seem to be obsessed with cramming as many things as possible into a minimal amount of space. From closet organizers to pocket organizers, we want to make full use of space, both tangible and intangible.

There are times in the Jewish calendar when we are given a specific amount of "spiritual space" and encouraged to fill it up.

The month of Elul that we are

currently in is just such a time. Elul is the round-up time for the previous year. It is the "inventory" season, "year-end accounting" time and the moment when each person writes and reads to himself his own "State of the Union" address.

In addition to Elul being a once-over concerning the past, it is a focus on the future, an opportunity to plan ahead armed with the wisdom gained from experience. Elul gives us the chance to concentrate on how we will do things differently in the upcoming year.

But there is a third aspect to Elul, as well. While we're remembering the past and considering the future, we are still living in the present. And in this present, Jewish teachings invite us to use the entire month of Elul to fill up our spiritual space with as many mitzvot as we can. We are encouraged to add more mitzvot to our repertoire of mitzvot and to enhance the manner in which we are already perform various mitzvot.

In Elul, we are urged specifically to give extra charity; to spend more time connecting with G-d through prayer; to have our mezuzot and tefilin checked by an expert scribe (and to put mezuzot on those doorways which might yet need them); to observe the laws of kashrut more carefully; to bless our friends, neighbors and relatives with a good, sweet year.

Using the spiritual space we're given during Elul to its fullest capacity can only be to our benefit for the coming year



