

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

In the Torah portion of *Tetzaveh* we read of the golden altar, upon which incense was offered, while in last week's portion we read about the copper altar, upon which animal sacrifices and meal offerings were brought.

The *Mishna* teaches that these two altars can never become ritually impure. Why? Rabbi Eliezer says, "since they are like earth," meaning that the Torah calls them earth and earth cannot become impure. The Sages offer another view: "since they are (only) coated (with gold and copper)," meaning that gold and copper are merely coatings, secondary to what is underneath. If the inside cannot become impure, the coatings don't become impure.

What lesson can we learn from this teaching? We are each a small Temple, where the Divine Presence wants to reside. Just as the Temple had different vessels in it, so too, we have different aspects to our makeup, mind, thoughts, emotions, etc.

Sometimes we can dwell on inappropriate thoughts. In this way, one of the person's "vessels" – thoughts, feelings, etc. – can become impure. Then the question is: how can we make the vessel pure again, that it should be fitting to be a Temple vessel, where G-d could reside once more?

Every Jew, irrespective of how he or she feels inside or acts outwardly, has a spark of G-dliness that can never be touched, can never become impure. And that is the "altar" within the person. When we reach inside and connect with our essential G-dly spark, we "offer up" our own "animal" and come closer to G-d.

Why do we become totally pure? That is the teaching of Rabbi Eliezer: "since they are like earth," that everyone walks on (has no ego). Our Jewish spark is completely one with G-d, it has no self. Its only desire is to fulfill G-d's will that is revealed in the Torah.

That was the path that Rabbi Eliezer himself lived. He was "greater than all the sages of Israel together", and yet he had no ego, as the Talmud tells us, "He never said anything that he hadn't heard from his teachers." He was like earth, nullified before G-d, and that was the path of service he taught his students to follow. On a deeper level, he was at such a high plane, that he only saw that everything was the essence of G-d, he didn't see the external shell. When he looked at a person, he did not see riches, gold, or poverty, copper. He only saw the essence, earth.

The Sages presented another view, for those of us who do notice the exterior and occasionally are tempted by it. The Jew remains pure, "since they are (only) coated (with gold and copper)." The temptations that come with wealth (gold) and the desperation that comes from poverty (bronze) can sometimes lead us astray.

But whether rich or poor, we must realize that the gold and copper are only an exterior that is nullified to what is underneath, the Jewish spark. Ultimately we will come to realize this, uncover our essence, and merit the coming of Moshiach. May it be now!

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

## One Plus One Equals

Purim is such a great holiday. Children and adults love to celebrate Purim with the exciting *mitzot* (commandments) and customs of the day. Dressing up, eating *hamentashen* for dessert at the Purim meal (do you like prune, poppy, raspberry or apricot?), twirling the *grogger* at Haman's name in the *Megila*, and giving *shalach manot* – food gifts to friends. These are the reasons why we all look forward to Purim.

But what do these Purim *mitzot* and customs have in common? Let's take off the masks, open up the *shalach manot*, look inside the *Megila* – peel the layers off of everything – and see the common denominator intrinsic to all of them.

When someone is wearing a costume or mask, his identity is concealed. Rich or poor, smart or average, pretty or homely, we don't perceive the physical, economic, or intellectual differences that often separate us. Yes, one costume is expensive, another more original, and there are lots of Queen Esthers. But that these are just externals. They aren't the person inside the costume. On a very basic level, when we dress up on Purim our superficial differences are momentary.

The *Megila*, recounting the triumph of right over might, good over evil, and the Jews' faith in G-d over the vile schemes of Haman, is also a lesson in Jewish equality and unity. For, it was only once the Jews united that they were saved from Haman's plan of annihilation. Men, women, and children, scholars and shoe cobblers, peasants and the Queen, all fasted and prayed as one for three days to avert the evil decree. And because they united, because each one felt equally responsible and able to effect a change, their prayers and penitence were accepted.

Now, on to those *hamentashen*. Some say they are meant to remind us of Haman's hat or his ears. But they are also symbolic of that which is hidden within.

G-d's hand, so to speak, was hidden during the whole Purim episode – the incidents which led up to Esther being crowned queen, Mordechai overhearing the palace guards' plot to kill Ahasuerus, etc., seemed quite natural. But they were Divine Providence, G-d's way of putting together an intricate puzzle.

Just as the filling is concealed in the *hamentashen* and the Divine was hidden during the Purim epoch, the Divine within each of us is often hidden. The Divine within each of us is our soul – the actual part of G-d that gives us life. And though it is intangible, though its existence is often concealed, the soul is the great equalizer of all of us. For, though one Jew might do more *mitzot* than another, or have a more comprehensive Jewish education, or be kinder or gentler, the essence of our souls and their source are the same – an actual part of G-d.

Lastly, we have the *shalach manot*. They range from a sandwich bag with raisins, cookies and a drink to a three-foot-high wicker basket filled with aged-wine and elegant treats. There are numerous differences in packaging, price and products, but all *shalach manot* have one thing in common: they foster unity. Unity not just because we feel good when we give and when we receive. But unity also because we customarily give the *shalach manot* through a messenger - we involve another person in the *mitzva*. When giving the *shalach manot* we connect not only with the person to whom we are giving, but to a third person as well. And the messenger can be anyone - young or old, friend or stranger, male or female.

Purim is a special time to participate in these *mitzot*. For, as the Rebbe explained, the Redemption is imminent and each act of kindness, every good deed, any additional *mitzva*, helps us better prepare ourselves for that era which is unfolding before our very eyes.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## *The Show Must Go On* with Leah Gniwisch



*This story was taken from Here's My Story and is presented with permission from JEM's My Encounter with the Rebbe oral history project, which is dedicated to recording first-person testimonies documenting the life and guidance of the Rebbe.*

After I got married in 1961, I got involved with the Lubavitch community in Montreal, Canada, where we were living.

One of the first issues that came up was the lack of any kind of entertainment venues for the community. So, in order to fix that, I helped start a drama group with the aim of producing plays for women. Once a year around Purim time, we would stage a play with the proceeds going to *Maot Chittim* (the "Wheat Fund" which provided poor families with Passover necessities).

Not only was the religious community served by these shows, many non-observant Jews got involved as well. They auditioned for parts in the plays and, in the process, we all became friends. In this way we were able to get to know people whom we'd never have met otherwise. And, as the rehearsals took place three or four nights a week, in the course of working so closely together, we had a lot of influence on them.

The shows were done quite professionally. We hired directors and musicians, and the scripts

were written by Mrs. Golda Schwei, who adapted Broadway musicals, rewriting them and giving them a Jewish theme. For instance, we took *The Sound of Music* and called it *The Sound of Torah*. We kept the music, but we rewrote the lyrics. The result was a classy production, and our first two performances were filled to capacity.

Of course, we sent the Rebbe a ticket each time, and each time, he sent us a letter wishing us success. As well, when he learned that some people ridiculed our efforts, he sent us a letter of support.

After four years of doing this, we realized that we had to stop. It just took too much effort. For fourth months, while we were rehearsing, we were consumed by the project. During this time, our husbands had to watch the kids. We'd be running out seven o'clock each night, and our husbands had to do the homework with the kids and put them to sleep. For those ladies whose husbands balked, it wasn't easy.

Nevertheless, because the plays were so successful, we didn't give up, even when it was clear we should. We kept saying, "This is going to be the last one," but the next year we would start up again.

Then we finally decided – this is it. Our husbands were fed up; they didn't want us doing it anymore.

But then the Rebbe stepped in.

Here's what happened:

Three months before Pesach, around the time we would usually start the production, I happened to be in New York and I had an audience with the Rebbe.

Of course, he asked me, "Are you going to put on a play this year?"

"Unfortunately, I don't think so," I answered, "because the women's husbands are too tired."

The Rebbe looked at me and said, "You go back and tell these husbands that they must do whatever is necessary, and you have to make sure that the play takes place this year."

I got the message. I went back, called the women together and said, "The Rebbe wants us to put on the play this year. This is not coming from me, but from the Rebbe. So, you have to tell your husbands that they're going to have to deal with

the Rebbe if they don't agree."

Of course, nobody argued, and we went forward. We worked like crazy. We put the production together in eight weeks, and it was very successful. Needless to say, the Rebbe was very happy, and he sent me a check for thirty-six dollars that year for the *Maot Chittim*.

We staged the plays for ten consecutive years until I took ill and I couldn't organize them anymore. The Rebbe never asked me about it again.

But I would like to tell a story about another instance when the Rebbe encouraged me to carry on even though it was tough.

There came a time, many years later, when my son was getting married to a girl from South Africa. Looking forward to this happy event, we booked tickets on El Al, flying from New York via Tel Aviv to Johannesburg.

Now this took place in 1991, during the Gulf War, and our future daughter-in-law's father was very nervous about us flying through Israel, which was then enduring constant scud-missile attacks from Saddam Hussein. So he called and asked us to book a ticket on British Airways instead. He was not the only one. Several of our non-Jewish friends tried to persuade us to cancel our tickets, and even the El Al representative offered to book us on another airline so that we could circumvent Israel.

Although we still wanted to fly through Israel, we decided to ask the Rebbe if this was a wise thing to do.

A week before our trip we went to see the Rebbe while he was distributing dollars for charity, and I took this opportunity to tell him about our travel plans, and to ask him for a blessing for a safe trip.

The Rebbe said, "Israel is the safest place in the world. It is the place 'the eyes of the L-rd are upon from the beginning of the year until the end.' Therefore, there is no reason to worry." In addition to that, he gave us all an extra dollar to give to charity in Israel.

Needless to say, we stayed course, and the trip was a successful and a happy one.

*Mrs. Leah Gniwisch is the founder and CEO of Delmar Jewelers International and has been named Vendor of the Year by Zales in Canada. She was interviewed in her home in Montreal, Canada in January of 2011.*

*For more information, please email [mystory@jemedia.org](mailto:mystory@jemedia.org)*

## *New Emissaries*

**Rabbi Saadya and Chaya Sara Kaufmann** have established **Chabad of Texas Towns** serving Jews the cities and towns throughout rural Texas. Based in Houston, the cities the Kaufmanns visit include Bay City, Beaumont, Brenham, Fredericksburg, Laredo, Lubbock, Lufkin, Midland/Odessa, Nacogdoches, Palestine, Temple, Tyler, Waco. If you live in a city not visited contact Rabbi Kaufmann at 917-498-4668 or visit [www.chabadtexas.com](http://www.chabadtexas.com).

**Rabbi Mendel and Leah Baitelman** are establishing Chabad of **Universal City, California**, the 30th Chabad House in the Encino Valley. Universal City is home to the entertainment capital of Los Angeles, Universal Studios.

**Rabbi Shmuel and Shterni Freedman** arrived recently in **Bahia Blanca, Argentina**. They will bolster and build on the work of Shmuel's parents Rabbi Moshe Freedman, who passed away in 2016 and (may she live and be well) Mrs. Sara Freedman who has been continuing the Chabad work since then.

## Today Is...

### 15 Adar I

At present, inanimate objects are silent; even when trodden on, they hold their peace. However, there will come a future time when inanimate objects will begin to speak, relate and demand: "If a person did not think or speak words of Torah while he was walking, why did *he* tread on *them*? For the thousands of years since the Six Days of Creation, the earth upon which we tread has been waiting for one or two Jews to walk on it and exchange words of Torah. For if they do not, the earth declares: "You are no different than an animal!"



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

7 Adar, 5713 [1953]

The story of Purim, as related in the Book of Esther, gives us a clear analysis of the "Jewish problem."

Being dispersed over 127 provinces and lands, their own still in ruins, the Jews undoubtedly differed from one another in custom, garment and tongue according to the place of their dispersal, very much in the same way as Jews in different lands differ nowadays. Yet, though there were Jews who would conceal their Jewishness, Haman, the enemy of the Jews, recognized the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jews which made all of them, with or without their consent, into "one people," namely, "their laws are different from those of any other people." (Book of Esther 3:8).

Hence, in his wicked desire to annihilate the Jews, Haman seeks to destroy "all the Jews, young and old, children and women." Although there were in those days, too, Jews who strictly adhered to the Torah and mitzvot, and Jews whose religious ties with their people were weak, or who sought to assimilate themselves, yet none could escape the classification of belonging to that "one people," and every one was included in Haman's cruel decree.

In all ages there were Hamans, yet we have outlived them, thank G-d. Wherein lies the secret of our survival?

The answer will be evident from the following illustration. When a scientist seeks to ascertain the laws governing a certain phenomenon, or to discover the essential properties of a certain element in nature, he must undertake a series of experiments under the most varied conditions in order to discover those properties or laws which are obtained under all conditions alike. No true scientific law can be deduced from a minimum number of experiments, or from experiments under similar or only slightly varied conditions, for the results as to what is essential and what is secondary or quite unimportant would then not be conclusive.

The same principle should be applied to our people. It is one of the oldest in the world,

beginning its national history from the Revelation at Mount Sinai, some 3300 years ago. In the course of these long centuries our people has lived under extremely varied conditions, [in] most different times and different places all over the world. If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the cause and very basis of the existence of our people and its unique strength, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, not its tongue, manner and customs (in a wider sense), nor even its racial purity (for there) were times in the early history of our people, as well as during the Middle Ages and even recent times, when whole ethnic groups and tribes have become proselytes and part of our people).

The essential element which unites our "dispersed and scattered people" and makes it "one people" throughout its dispersion and regardless of time, is the Torah and mitzvot, the Jewish way of life which has remained basically the same through out the ages and in all places. The conclusion is clear and beyond doubt: it is the Torah and mitzvot which made our people indestructible on the world scene in the face of massacres and pogroms aiming at our physical destruction, and in the face of ideological onslaughts of foreign cultures aiming at our spiritual destruction.

Purim teaches us the age-old lesson, which has been verified even most recently, to our sorrow, that no manner of assimilationism, not even such which is extended over several generations, provides an escape from the Hamans and Hitler; nor can any Jew sever his ties with his people by attempting such an escape.

On the contrary: Our salvation and our existence depend precisely upon the fact that "their laws are different from those of any other people."

Purim reminds us that the strength of our people as a whole, and of each individual Jew and Jewess, lies in a closer adherence to our ancient spiritual heritage, which contains the secret of harmonious life, hence of a healthy and happy life. All other things in our spiritual and temporal life must be free from any contradiction to the basis and essence of our existence, and must be attuned accordingly in order to make for the utmost harmony, and add to our physical and spiritual strength, both of which go hand in hand in Jewish life.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim and may we live to see a world free of Hamans and all types of Amalekites...

end of the miracles that were given to be put in writing. It was the beginning of the dawn that would blaze to light with the coming of Moshiach, as it is written in Isaiah 60:1, "Arise, shine, for your light has come; G-d's glory shines upon you" (Me'am Loez)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

*This Friday we celebrate Purim, commemorating the time when the Jews were delivered from Haman's terrible decree. Once Haman's plot to destroy the Jews became known, Mordechai sent a messenger to Queen Esther, asking her to go to the King on behalf of her people.*

*Esther hesitated; anyone who approached the king without being summoned and did not meet with his favor forfeited his life. When Esther relayed this message to Mordechai, the Megila tells us he responded:*

*"Think not of yourself... For if you hold your peace at this time, then the deliverance will come to the Jews from another place.... And who knows whether you came to the kingdom for just such a time as this."*

*Esther understood Mordechai's message. As a tzadik and the leader of the Jewish people of that generation, Mordechai knew, through Divine inspiration, that the Jewish people would be delivered. Their deliverance was certain; it would come from somewhere. The only question was who would help actualize this Divinely inspired promise?*

*Esther capitulated and asked Mordechai to tell the Jews to fast and pray for three days so she would be successful in finding favor in the king's eyes and finally saving the Jewish people. That is what happened and the Jews were ultimately delivered.*

*We are certain that Moshiach is coming – the redemption of the Jewish people through Moshiach is one of the 13 Principles of our Jewish Faith. And we know that Moshiach is coming soon, for the Rebbe announced, "The time of your Redemption has arrived."*

*The only questions are, "Who will help actualize this Divinely inspired promise? Who will be prepared and help others prepare?"*

*The responsibility lies with each of us. We must do everything we can to hasten the total fulfillment of one of the last verses of the Megila that, "there was light and joy, gladness and honor," so may it be with us.*

*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 Talmud states that just as the dawn is the end of the night, so the Book of Esther was the



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

In the 1500s, there lived in Persia a king who was descended from King Ahasuerus. This king took an interest in his royal ancestors and found out that the Jewish people had a document called the Scroll of Esther that spoke of King Ahasuerus. In the scroll, Haman had offered to pay King Ahasuerus 10,000 silver coins in order to do whatever he wanted with the Jews. In the end the money was not paid.

The Persian king devised a plan. He summoned the rabbis and Jewish leaders and asked them: "Is everything written in the Scroll of Esther true?" They assured him that it is all true.

"Then I command you to pay the 10,000 silver coins you owe my ancestor King Ahasuerus!" bellowed the king.

The rabbis tried to explain that King Ahasuerus remitted the money to Haman as it says: "The money is given to you." But the king did not give in: "I am a descendant of King Ahasuerus and you are the descendants of the Jewish people. I want the money within a month or you will be expelled from your homes!"

The harsh decree shocked the Persian Jews. All over Persia the rabbis proclaimed days of prayer and fasting. The synagogues were full of people reciting Psalms, and large sums of charity were distributed. The Jewish leaders estimated that even if they were all to sell their possessions and even their homes, they would not reach the sum that the king requested. They sent a messenger to Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Holy Ari in Safed, Israel, to ask for his help.

Upon the messenger's arrival, he handed over the letter written by the rabbis in Persia, asking the Holy Ari to intercede in heaven on their behalf. The Holy Ari went into his private study for a while and then returned to the messenger, holding a small box in his hand.

The Ari said to him: "The Jews have repented with a full heart and the evil decree has been revoked. There is no need to pay the ransom money. Instead, on the day of payment, the leaders of the Jewish community are to hand over this box to the king. The box must not be opened by anyone but the king."

That night the king did not sleep well. He had a terrifying dream. In it a mighty storm was raging outside his palace. Suddenly the window to his room burst open. A man in white with fiery eyes entered his room through the window. The man took him by the hand and led him out through the window. They passed houses and fields until they reached an opening in a forest.

The man turned to the king and asked him in a stern voice: "What do you see?"

"I see a high pole – and somebody is hanging from its top," the king said in fear.

They continued their walk, and again the man asked the king what he saw. "I see another high pole with somebody hanging from it – and there is another one and yet another..."

"How many poles do you see?" the man asked.

"I can see 11 poles with people hanging from the top – and over there is another pole – but nobody is hanging from it," said the king trembling with fear.

"The people hanging there are Haman and his ten sons," said the man to the king. "The empty pole is meant for people who walk in their evil ways!"

The man took the king by his hand and led him back to his palace. The figure made the king sit down next to his writing desk and said: "Give up all your claims against the Jews and sign the document with the royal seal!"

The king wrote the document with a trembling hand, signed it, and stamped the royal seal under his signature. He handed the document to the man who disappeared through the window. Suddenly the king woke up from his nightmare. He found himself sitting next to his desk, shivering with fear. Outside there was a quiet summer night.

"What a strange dream I had," he thought and went back to bed. The following morning he remembered the dream but dismissed it.

The messenger came back from Safed to the Jewish leaders in Persia. The Holy Ari had helped! The Jews continued to study Torah, immersed themselves in prayer, and took upon themselves to improve, especially asking increasing in brotherly love.

When the designated day came, the Jewish leaders took the box and approached the king.

"Where is my money?" the king roared.

"Your majesty, we have been instructed to bring this box to you," said the spokesman of the delegation and handed the box to the king.

The king took the box, opened it and found a sealed document inside. When he started to read what was written, he suddenly fainted. Upon regaining consciousness he began to tremble

uncontrollably. "It was not a dream!" he whispered. "The next hanging pole was meant for me because of my behavior towards the Jews."

The king handed the document to the Jewish leaders and said, "Everything written in this document is hereby established in law. I give up all my claims regarding the debt. I promise not to harm any Jew from now on. You are released from all previous monetary claims."

"The Jews had light and joy and gladness and honor" (Esther 8:16). They immediately dispatched a special messenger in order express their gratitude to the Holy Ari. All over Persia the Jews made joyous celebrations of thanksgiving to G-d for their wonderful delivery.

*From Chassidic Gems by Tivvia Litzman*

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

### Olive oil, pounded, for the lighting (Ex. 27:20)

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad, once said: "He who wants to reach the 'lighting,' the enlightenment to be found in the Torah, should work on himself by 'pounding' away at his ego and nullifying his sense of self. How? By always bearing in mind that the Torah he learns is none other than the wisdom and the will of G-d. That is the meaning of our supplication, 'Open my heart to Your Torah.'"

### Command the Children of Israel that they bring you pure olive oil, pounded, for the lighting, to cause a light to burn always (Ex. 27:20)

The First and Second Holy Temples illuminated the world with their light for a specific and limited period of time. The Third Holy Temple, however, which will be rebuilt when Moshiach comes, will be in fulfillment of the latter half of the verse, "to cause a light to burn always." Its light will never be extinguished. (Rabbi Yitzchak Karo)

### You shall command—ve'ata tetzave (Ex. 27:30)

Chasidic thought interprets this verse to mean, "You shall connect yourself to..." Moses was commanded to establish a connection between his essence and the Jewish people. In an extended sense, this command can be understood as having been directed to every Jew, for each Jew has a spark of Moses in him. "You" refers to the essence of the soul, the fundamental core of every Jew's being. This is revealed by the establishment of a bond with G-d's essence. (The Rebbe)

### Everyone who sought G-d went out to the Tabernacle of Meeting, which was outside the camp (Ex.30:7)

In actuality they were looking for Moses, yet the Torah states that they were seeking G-d. We thus learn that receiving the leader of the generation is the same as receiving G-d Himself. (Jerusalem Talmud, Eruvin)



### 5:26 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

**Purim!!**

14 Adar/ Feb 26

Torah Portion Tetzaveh

Shushan Purim

Shabbat ends 6:26 PM

Dedicated in honor of  
**Michael (Moishe) N. David, Esq.,**  
Attorney At Law