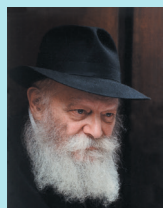


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The Haftora for the Torah portion of *Vayetzei* is the prophecy of Hosea. It speaks of Jacob's descent to Haran and his work for Laban to have the right to marry Rachel and Leah.

Sprinkled throughout the Haftora is the exodus from Egypt, allusions to our future redemption and assurances that if we follow on G-d's path then G-d will help us succeed. Similarly, in the Torah portion, with G-d's help, Jacob succeeds in Haran, coming out with great wealth and a beautiful family.

The story of Jacob going down to Haran is the story of the Jewish people going into exile and the future redemption. On a deeper level it is the mission of the soul coming into the body.

There are two types of exile. There is an exile of plenty, where we are free and lack nothing. However, because of this abundance, we follow our desires, falling lower and lower. When this happens, our holy energy, meant to nourish the good and positive forces in the world, ends up energizing the negative forces. This is symbolized by the country of Ashur, in which we enjoyed relative freedom.

Then there is the exile of suffering where we feel stuck, unable to do the simplest of things. Because of the suffering and oppression, our thoughts and abilities become constricted and obstructed. We are stuck in our troubles. This is symbolized by the country of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt), which means constraints, and where we were in servitude.

To this the Haftora says that when Moshiach comes, "He will roar like a lion... They will hurry like a bird from Egypt, and like a dove from Ashur, I will settle them in their homes..." What is the lion's roar? That is the sound of the shofar that G-d will sound when Moshiach comes. Why the metaphor of a bird and a dove? Because no matter how far they stray from their nest, they always find their way back home. The same is true about the Jewish people, no matter which kind of exile or how far we stray, we will find our way back home.

Now the Haftora says, "Like a merchant who has deceitful scales in his hand." The merchant is likened to the soul. When it was above, it had silver and gold (love and awe of G-d). The soul/merchant is "deceitful" because it intends to "trick" the body into being the vehicle for holiness. The soul is willing to give up everything, descend to this lowly world, enter the body and impact the body and the world through Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments). This is the meaning of the verse in Psalms, "To me, the Torah of your lips is better than thousands of gold and silver." The Torah uttered by the lips, down in this physical world, is more valuable to the soul than all the love and awe it experienced while it was still in heaven.

This is a testament to how precious and valuable even the smallest mitzva we do is to our souls and by extension, G-d.

May we each get closer to G-d and may our precious mitzvot finally tip the scales and usher in the redemption.

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

Six Hours of Panic

by Rabbi Uriel Vigler

A few weeks ago, on a Monday morning, we celebrated a beautiful Bar Mitzva at our *shul* (synagogue). I took a selfie with the bar mitzvah boy and his family and posted it on my Instagram and Facebook stories. I thought it would inspire others to pray and put on tefillin.

But when I checked to see how many people had viewed the story, the number was unusually low—barely 100, when it should be closer to 1,000. "How strange," I thought. "Let me refresh the page." But no matter how many times I refreshed, the number didn't move. And it was a great picture!

Then I Whatsapp'd a community member to check on the status of her mezuzot and I noticed the message wasn't going through. Then it dawned on me that my phone had been atypically silent for the last few minutes. Where were all the hundreds of messages that usually come in non-stop? I assumed the issue was my wifi, so I went outside and kept hitting refresh.

When that didn't help, it hit me that something must be wrong, which a quick Google instantly confirmed.

As everyone now knows, Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram were down for a full business day, wreaking havoc on billions across the globe.

And I, like so many others, panicked. You see, I'm in the inspiration business, and social media is my primary tool. My job is to reach out and inspire people. To come to shul, to give charity, to get closer to G-d, to study Torah. And I communicate through Instagram, Facebook, and

especially Whatsapp.

Whatsapp is my lifeline. Without it, I feel imprisoned. Constricted. Inhibited. I use it to communicate with my family in South Africa and Israel, to plan with my team, to collaborate with Chabad rabbis across the globe, and to reach out to individuals.

It felt like a snow day. Like Shabbat. Like the holidays all over again.

It was also a wakeup call.

Social media is here today but gone tomorrow, I realized. All those friends, followers, likes, and comments can disappear in the blink of an eye. And what did they really mean?

Does it really matter how many followers you have on Instagram? How many friends on Facebook? How many Whatsapp groups you're in? For six hours, I, and billions of others, had time to contemplate that.

What we can ensure, I concluded, is that we have the one follower Who actually counts: G-d. It is He Who we need to impress. His comments we should be seeking. And no matter how many apps and sites go down, He remains equally available at all times. He won't let us down.

So deeply have we come to rely on people being instantly available, that we may have neglected to communicate with the One Who is truly always there, at all times, in all conditions.

Let's pause for a moment, think about that, and commit to talking to Him more. Unlike the internet, we can be assured He won't let us down.

Rabbi Vigler codirects Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side in New York City with his wife Shevi. From Rabbi Vigler's blog at www.chabadic.com

SLICE OF LIFE

The Most Beautiful Brit by Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman



Rabbi Schusterman teaching a class

A few weeks ago, I traveled to perform a *brit mila* (circumcision) to Brunswick, Maine, a little town with a population of 20,000. This recent experience reminded me of the following story.

While I was in Israel studying to become a *mohel* (ritual circumcisor) over 15 years ago, I participated in over 200 brit ceremonies. We covered all the various different communities. Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox, ultra-ultra-Orthodox, secular, semi-secular, traditional, Zionis, apathetic, Hassidic, Mizrachi and on and on. The one thing all of these communities had in common, was the fact that when it came to a Jewish life-cycle event, they all wanted it done, and done at the highest spiritual level possible.

I thought I had seen ever possible brit scenario until one morning, my teacher, Rabbi Weisberg, informed me that that day we were going to do a very special brit. We pulled up to a nondescript house on the outskirts of Jerusalem with tall apartment

buildings. Rabbi Weisberg proceeded to lead me to a small apartment of a poor immigrant couple from Russia who had somehow found out about him. When we were let in, they told him in their broken Hebrew, that they had heard about him from a friend and they proceeded to pull out his business card.

Now Rabbi Weisberg is one of at least a hundred mohels in the Jerusalem area, and because he is the uncontested leading expert in all of Israel and the world, he has no less than five and as many as 12 brisim a day. For him to find the time to perform a brit for a poor immigrant couple who I assumed (correctly) would pay him little to no money at all for his time, expertise and materials, was a little surprising.

There were no participants except the parents and a grandmother, the baby, Rabbi Weisberg and me. The rabbi pulled out the supplies, donned his *Tallit*, placed the baby gently on the TV table, and preceded to perform the ceremony as I had seen him do numerous times in fancy halls with hundreds of people in attendance and a lavish catered meal that would follow the brit.

The mother and grandmother were crying profusely as they murmured in Russian (which I happen to speak) about how special it was that their son would be entered into the covenant without the fear that they had grown up with in their motherland.

The ceremony was done, the items neatly packed away and we proceeded onward to a fancy hall where the grandson of a very prominent rabbi was going to have his brit.

Of all the circumcision ceremonies that I attended, the one in the small, nondescript apartment with not even a minyan attending was perhaps the most meaningful. These people didn't get lost on the exterior unimportant things, like who was wearing what, or what food was being served or who was attending. They were focused totally and only on the event, the bond that the child was

being entered into, adding him as another link in the golden chain that began with his great great grandfather Abraham our forefather.

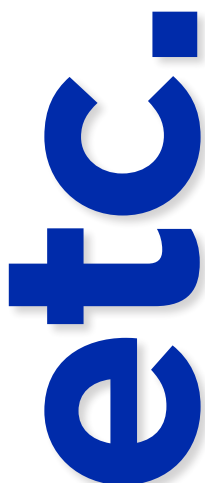
There is a story the Rebbe would tell: On the occasion of his fourth or fifth birthday, Rabbi Sholom DovBer visited his grandfather the third Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbi Menachem Mendel. Upon entering his grandfather's room, the child burst into tears. His teacher in yeshiva had taught them the verse in that week's Torah reading (*Genesis 18:1-22:24*), which begins, "And G-d revealed himself to Abraham..." Why, wept the child, doesn't G-d reveal Himself to me?

Rabbi Menachem Mendel replied: "When a Jew, a righteous person, realizes at the age of 99 that he must circumcise himself – that he must continue to perfect himself – he is worthy that G-d should reveal Himself to him."

I find it so profound that his grandfather, the Rebbe, didn't answer that Abraham was so righteous or full of good deeds or holy. He answered that Abraham had committed himself to continuing to perfect himself through the ritual of a brit, despite his age and being settled in his way of life. This dedication to continuing to learn, expand and enhance his unity with G-d deemed him worthy of revelation.

I venture to say that this young child, born to poor immigrant parents who had never received a Jewish education, was entered into the bond of our ancestor Abraham as perfectly as any of the very holy, righteous families who had brit ceremonies with all of the spiritual and material underpinnings. This family was focused. They knew what they had to do and they did it. They were committed to continuing to learn, expand and enhance their connection to G-d, regardless of what they had been through.

Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman and his wife Raizel run the Chabad of Peabody Jewish Center. Rabbi Schusterman is a proud father of 7 who enjoys many hobbies, including exercise, skiing and writing. He is a certified mohel and loves to write on a wide variety of topics. Read more of his writings at RabbiSchusterman.com



New Home

A spacious barn property is being turned into a **Chabad Jewish Center in Brattleboro, Vermont**. The project, under the direction of **Rabbi Avremy and Chaya Raskin**, will be completed in stages. Phase One, which will be completed soon after closing, will allow for a dedicated synagogue space within the existing home on the property. Phase Two will renovate the existing barn building to become a beautiful synagogue with classrooms, educational displays, and a convenient kosher shop.

New Torah

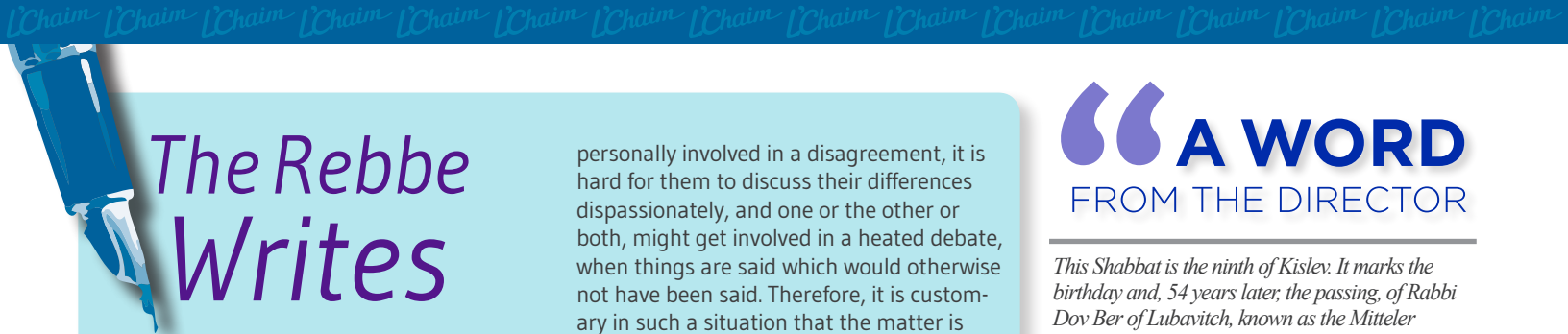
Chabad of Robbinsville and Hamilton, New Jersey, under the directorship of Rabbi Yaacov and Chana Chaiton, recently celebrated the completion of a new Torah Scroll. The Torah was welcomed under the banner of uniting the community and honoring the life of heroic holocaust survivor Alexander Bogatyr.



Today Is...

8 Kislev

Man should ponder thoughtfully how great are the kindnesses of the Creator: Such a puny insignificant being, Man, can bring great delight to the "Greatest of all great" of Whom it is written, "There is no delving into His greatness." Man ought therefore always be inspired, and perform his avoda with an eager heart and spirit.



The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

19th of Cheshvan, 5735 [1974]

Your letter reached me with some delay. In it you write about your problem in regard to the relationship with your wife, after being married for 14 years and having been blessed with children. You also indicate that the problem is connected with the observance of the Jewish way of life.

In the latter aspect lies also the answer to your questions. It is the Jewish way of life, in accordance with the Torah, that having been married for a number of years, and having been blessed with children who are to be brought up to a life of Torah, Chuppah [marriage] and Good Deeds, it is imperative to do everything possible to preserve the peace and harmony of the family to the fullest measure.

At the same time it is also clear that, inasmuch as the Torah is the Jew's very life, there can be no sacrificing of it even in the hope of preserving the family, for, on the contrary, a peaceful and harmonious Jewish family life is possible only if it is based on the observance of the Torah and Mitzvot [commandments], as is also written in reference to the Torah that "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace."

Needless to say, while it is necessary to insist upon the Jewish way of life, this should be explained to the wife in a pleasant way, taking into account her feelings, and not giving the impression that there is any desire to "boss" her around and to show who is the master of the house; but that this is really for the benefit of both the parents and the children and, what is no less important, also for the benefit of the whole Jewish people, since the family unit is the very basis of our Jewish people as a whole.

It is a matter of common experience, due to human nature, that when two persons are

personally involved in a disagreement, it is hard for them to discuss their differences dispassionately, and one or the other or both, might get involved in a heated debate, when things are said which would otherwise not have been said. Therefore, it is customary in such a situation that the matter is brought before an orthodox Rabbi, who has the experience, as well as being bound to treat such matters in confidence. Thus, the matter can be discussed fully in the presence of the Rabbi, and straightened out in accordance with his guidance.

I would like to add one important point, that a Jew who accepts the Jewish way of life in his daily life, even though it was not spontaneous, but came about through the influence or even persuasion by another—sooner or later this Jew will come to realize the truth, namely that it was for his real benefit, and whatever his original reaction might have been whether he was reluctant or resentful, in the end he will certainly be most grateful for that kind of influence which has set him on the path of truth and real happiness.

You do not mention anything about the Jewish education of your children, but I trust that in light of the above, and in accordance with the traditional blessing, you are bringing them up to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds.

Hoping to hear good news from you in all the above,

P.S. You mention in your letter that you would like to speak to me personally, but this is not at all necessary inasmuch as my reply to you would be the same as outlined above. Moreover, it would not even be very practical to see me, necessarily briefly, for this is a case where both parties have to have an opportunity to unburden themselves fully in the presence of a third objective person, preferably an orthodox Rabbi as indicated above, which may require more than one session.

I would suggest that you should have your Tefillin, as well as the Mezuzot of your home, checked to make sure they are Kosher, and to be meticulous in observing the Mitzvo of putting on the Tefillin every weekday morning.

(Gen. 28:14) At present, we must serve G-d in a manner of "ufaratza," that is, without any restrictions or limitations. Thus we shall hasten the coming of Moshiach, of whom it is written in the Book of Micha, "The poretz (the one who breaks through, i.e., the one who clears all obstacles and barriers) is gone up before them." (Living with Moshiach, J. Immanuel Schochet)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This Shabbat is the ninth of Kislev. It marks the birthday and, 54 years later, the passing, of Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch, known as the Mittlerer Rebbe.

About the Mittlerer Rebbe it was said that he was so immersed in Chasidut that "if his finger would have been cut, it would have bled Chasidut instead of blood!"

When the Mittlerer Rebbe was arrested by the Czarist government on slanderous charges (he was later released on the 10th of Kislev), even the government doctor, who was a prominent specialist, acknowledged that Chasidut was the Mittlerer Rebbe's very essence and life.

The doctor told the Russian authorities that they must allow the Mittlerer Rebbe to give talks on Chasidut to his Chasidim, explaining, "Just as you provide food for prisoners to ensure their existence, so too, must you allow him to teach Chasidut. His very life depends on it."

The authorities saw that this was true when, while imprisoned, the Mittlerer Rebbe's health waned. They agreed to let 50 Chasidim enter his prison room twice weekly to listen to a Chasidic discourse.

But the Mittlerer Rebbe was not only concerned about the spiritual life of his fellow Jews; he worked to better their situation materially, as well.

He encouraged thousands of Jews to settle on and farm the land so they would not have to be at the mercy of the anti-Semitic landowners or peasants. He established 22 Jewish farm settlements on land near the town of Cherson, which he had convinced the government to give for this purpose. Many of his Chasidim, however, were reluctant to move so far away from their Rebbe. Thus, the Mittlerer Rebbe promised to go to the trouble of travelling to them so he could teach Chasidut to them there.

Let's celebrate the ninth and tenth of Kislev in a fitting manner; with gatherings that will foster comradery and lead to good resolutions.

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

In this week's Torah portion we find the verse, "Ufaratzta (you shall spread out) to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south



IT HAPPENED ONCE

Once a chasid travelled with a dire problem to Rabbi Dovber, the second Rebbe of Chabad Lubavitch known as the Mittler Rebbe. He was renting an inn from the local *poretz* (landowner), and was about to be evicted because he was unable to pay his debts. The poretz was unwilling to wait any longer, and the Jew was in danger not only of losing his livelihood, but also his home.

The chasid entered the Rebbe's room for a private audience and told him the predicament. He requested that the Rebbe write a letter for him to a wealthy businessman named Moshe A. This man was a personal friend of the poretz and therefore a good potential intermediary.

The Rebbe agreed and wrote the letter. The chasid left, letter in hand, sure that his situation would shortly change. However, when he looked at the letter, he had a shock, for the letter was addressed to the wrong person. Instead of being addressed to the wealthy Moshe A., the letter was addressed to Moshe M. who was as poor as he himself. The Rebbe must have made a mistake, thought the chasid, for what could Moshe M. possibly do for him?

The chasid turned around and went right back to the Rebbe's residence and said to the Rebbe's attendant, "I must go back in to speak with the Rebbe. He gave me the letter, but he made a mistake in it, and I need it changed."

"I'm sorry," replied the gabbai. "You cannot see the Rebbe again so soon. There are many others waiting to be received."

"But, you don't understand," the chasid protested. "This is a matter of the greatest importance, and it can't wait, even a day. I won't take much of his time. The Rebbe just has to change a few words. You see, he addressed it to the wrong person."

The conversation was overheard by the Rebbe's son, who turned and commented, "A Rebbe doesn't make mistakes." The chasid turned and left, meditating on the words he had just heard, "A Rebbe doesn't make mistakes." He took this to heart and resolved to go the next day to see Moshe M. and present him with the Rebbe's letter.

When he arrived at Moshe M.'s humble cottage he told him about his audience with the Rebbe and showed him the letter. Moshe M. was confounded by the request that he intercede. "I would be very glad to help you, but what can I possibly do? I have nothing whatsoever to do with the poretz." But the chasid, who had become convinced that the Rebbe must have had something in mind, was persistent. Finally, Moshe M. agreed, although, one couldn't say that he knew what he was agreeing to do.

In the middle of the night there was a pounding on the door. Moshe M. roused himself and went to the door. "Who is there?" he asked.

"Open, please, it is I, the Count," came the reply. Moshe M. opened the door, and to his astonishment, there stood the poretz, the very man he planned to visit the following day, soaked and shivering with cold.

"Please, come in Your Honor," he said, and within an hour the poretz had changed into dry clothing, eaten and drunk. The poretz explained that that evening he was deep in the forest when he had been caught in an unexpected storm. This house had been the first one he had encountered when he left the forest, and that is how he came to be the guest of Moshe M.

Now, Moshe M. saw the Divine Providence in the unusual situation, and when they all went to bed for the night, he retired in a state of high anticipation as to how events would play themselves out. The next morning the poretz arose fit as before and readied himself to go home. Turning to his host, he said, "I am very grateful for everything you have done for me, and I would like to repay your kindness. What can I do for you?"

Moshe M. answered, "Please, Sir, just having had the honor of helping you is all the payment I need."

The poretz wouldn't take no for an answer, and repeated his request to repay the Jew. When the offer was made a third time, Moshe spoke up: "Sir, I have a brother who rents one of the inns on your Honor's property. Due to financial hardships of the past few years, he has been unable to pay his rent, and he is due to lose his lease on the inn. Might I ask Your Honor to reconsider his case?"

The poretz was immediately receptive to the request. "My friend, you are such a good fellow, I am sure that your brother is just like you. I will not only renew his lease, but I will also forgive his past rent. And you know, it is very lucky that you are speaking to me about it today. Why, I was planning to give the lease to the relative of a good friend of mine. My friend Moshe A. spoke to me recently about his relative that needed a position, and tomorrow I was planning to take care of the matter."

Later, when the two chasidim met, they discussed the workings of Divine Providence as foreseen by the Mittler Rebbe. For had the letter been addressed to the "right" rather than the "wrong" Moshe, the situation would have come to a very different and unhappy end for the chasid. They saw that indeed, "A Rebbe doesn't make a mistake."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

And behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven (Gen. 28:12)

If a person thinks that he has already perfected himself and "reached heaven," it is a sure sign that in fact, he has a long way to go. For it is only when an individual considers himself lowly and "on the earth" that he is able to ascend to greater spiritual heights. (*Toldot Yaakov Yosef*)

And, behold, the L-rd was standing over him ("Vehinei Hashem nitzav alav") (Gen. 28:13)

Rearranging the first letters of the above Hebrew verse results in the word "anav," meaning one who is humble. For it is precisely through humility, self-abnegation and acceptance of the yoke of Heaven that a person attains a sense of G-d's closeness. (*Ohr HaTorah*)

The land on which you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed (Gen. 28:13)

As Rashi comments, "The Holy One, blessed be He, folded up the entire land of Israel beneath him." Unlike his forefathers, Jacob did not have to travel the length and breadth of Israel in order to refine the sparks of holiness contained in each location. Rather, when G-d "folded up the land beneath him," he was able to refine all of them at once, in one place. (*The Baal Shem Tov*)

And he dreamed, and there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven (Gen. 28:12)

Jacob's ladder is symbolic of prayer, the purpose of which is to connect the upper and lower realms (the higher celestial spheres with the lower material plane). Moreover, prayer is a two-way street, elevating a person's corporeal nature while at the same time drawing spirituality down to earth. (*Likutei Diburim*)

Dedicated in honor of the first birthday of our dear son

התמים מנחם מענדל שיחי

לשנת ברכה והצלחה בגשמיות וברוחניות

by Y. Aaron and Raquel Vogel



4:22 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area

8 Kislev/Nov. 12

Torah Portion Vayeitzei

Shabbat ends 5:23 PM