L'Chaim

1880

בס"ד

8 Tammuz, 5785

July 4, 2025

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)

IT HAPPENED ONCE

It is known that the Prophet Elijah is sometimes permitted to descend to this world to help Jews in need. Once three men – a poor man, a simpleton, and a bachelor who was both poor and simple – came to Elijah to ask for his blessing.

The first man came to the prophet and said, "I'm so poor that I can't even feed and clothe my family. Please, take pity on me, and give me your blessing that I may become wealthy."

Elijah agreed to help, but on one condition: "When you become rich, and you certainly will, you must promise to give tzedaka [charity] and share your wealth with others." The man promised, and Elijah handed him a coin.

"This coin will make you rich," assured the prophet. "Don't forget your promise." The second man came and made his request: "Elijah, the thing I desire most in this world is to become a Torah scholar. Please, help me."

Elijah considered his request worthy, but made one condition: "When you become a Torah scholar, and you will, you must promise to instruct simple folk who want to learn Torah." "Of course, I promise," said the man.

"It would be my honor and privilege to teach my fellow Jews." Elijah took a sheet of paper on which was written the Hebrew alphabet and handed it to the man, saying, "If you study from this piece of paper, you will certainly become a great scholar. Don't forget your promise." The man parted from the prophet happily clutching the paper to his chest.

Then the third man approached the prophet. "Elijah, please take pity on me. I am no longer young; I am very poor and not so bright; and worst of all I'm all alone in the world without a wife. But I won't take just any wife -- I will marry only a woman with good sense."

Elijah took pity on the man. "I have the perfect wife for you. But, you must promise to listen to her in every matter, all the days of your life."

The man agreed and Elijah led him into the depths of the forest. They entered a small hut in the forest where an old woman and her daughter were sitting. "This woman is the perfect wife for you," said the prophet, nodding towards the daughter. Both parties agreed to the marriage which was held without delay.

Two years passed and Elijah returned to see if the three had kept their promises. First, he visited the opulent home of the formerly poor man. Approaching the door, he saw a sign which said in large letters: "Beggars and Deliveries to the Rear."

Elijah went to the back door and was given a small coin. "I wish to speak with your employer," demanded the prophet. "Not permitted. You can have a coin and a loaf of bread." "No," insisted Elijah. "I want to see the owner of this house." "Take two coins and be off with you!" Still, Elijah stood his ground.

In fact, he created such a fuss that the servants had to call the wealthy owner.

Elijah asked the man for a more substantial sum, but he just scoffed, "A coin should be enough for you.!" Each time he asked, Elijah was rebuffed more violently. "I see that you don't recognize me and you have forgotten your promise.

I am Elijah the Prophet and you must return my coin" Elijah told the ungrateful man. "Ha! Do you think that silly coin did anything for me? You can gladly have it back. It's worthless!"

He returned the coin, laughing. Needless to say, in no time the man was poor again. Next, Elijah visited the great yeshiva where the would-be scholar was now a famous Head of the Academy.

"Pardon me, Rabbi, but I would like to learn Torah," the prophet said to the great man. "Have you studied the entire Talmud with all of its commentaries?" "No, I haven't had the chance to learn, but I want to very much." "I'm sorry, I don't have time to instruct low-level students.

You see, I am the Head of the Yeshiva, and I have more important things to do!" Elijah begged three times, but to no avail. Then he said, "I see you don't recognize me and you haven't kept your promise.

You must return my paper!" "The paper is worthless," the scholar laughed. "Here, take it!" No sooner had the prophet departed when the Head of the Academy forgot all of his learning and was an ignoramus again.

Elijah trudged to the poor hut of the couple. The wife saw Elijah from afar and said to her husband, "We have never been privileged to have a guest, and here is a distinguished-looking man approaching.

Let's slaughter our cow and serve him properly." The husband couldn't imagine life without the cow, from which they eked out a bare subsistence, but he agreed. "If you feel that we should, let's prepare the cow."

Elijah ate, and when he finished he said to the couple, "I see that you have lived according to your promise, and so, I have two more gifts for you – a coin and a paper."

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In loving memory of
Dr. Reuven Avraham Cyrulnik ע"ה

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THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Which has no blemish, which has never borne a yoke (Numbers 19:2)

If a person sees himself as "without blemish," confident that he has already reached perfection, it is a sure sign that he "has never borne a yoke" – he has never accepted the yoke of heaven. Otherwise he would understand that he is still full of flaws and imperfections...

(The Seer of Lublin)

And he hit the rock with his staff (Num. 20:11)

Chasidic philosophy explains that the dor hamidbar, the generation of Jews who left Egypt, was considered to be on the spiritual level of "dibur," or "speech" (both words share the Hebrew root daled, bet, resh). The generation of Jews which entered the Land of Israel was on the spiritual level of deed, for they involved themselves in the practical mitzvot which could only be done after they left the wilderness. This, therefore, is one of the reasons Moses hit the rock with his staff and did not merely speak to it to bring the water forth – he recognized that a physical action was most suited to the needs of the generation of Jews he then led. In truth, however, he should have tried to elevate them to the higher level of speech. And this is why he was punished by G-d. *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

And when a serpent had bitten any man, and he looked up at the serpent of copper, and lived (Num. 21:9)

The serpent has two diametrically opposed qualities: It can wound, and it can also heal. A person who is learned in Torah should also possess the same two characteristics- and know when each is appropriate. Moses, the greatest scholar who ever lived and who embodied only goodness and mercy, alluded to this in the first wonder he performed for Pharaoh when his staff turned into a serpent: A person must know when power and strength must be shown. *(Degel Machane Efraim)*

8:12 *Candle Lighting Time*

NY Metro Area

8 Tammuz / July 4

Torah Portion *Chukat*

Ethics Ch 5

Shabbat ends **9:20 pm**

LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Chukat, we read about the passing of Miriam, and the well of Miriam drying up.

We read how the Jewish people were thirsty, Moses hit the rock and water came out once again. We were so close to the Holy Land, but couldn't get in because Edom wouldn't allow us passage through their land.

Then, Aaron's passing, the second war against Amalek, and finally we were forced to turn back and take the long way around the land of Edom. Disheartened, the Jewish people turned against G-d and Moses: "Why did you bring us up from Egypt to die in the desert..."

G-d sent snakes which bit them, and many died. Realizing that they were wrong, they asked for forgiveness, and that Moses pray for them, which he did immediately.

G-d told Moses to make a copper snake and put it on a staff. Anyone bitten, would look at the snake and live.

This is followed by miracles and victories. Even though life was getting more and more difficult for the Jewish people, the expectation was that we remain loyal to G-d and to Moses.

Why is so much expected from us? Why did Moses forgive them so quickly? What is the idea of looking at the snake, that saved them?

The first lesson found here is that we have been chosen by G-d for a reason, because G-d sees the amazing qualities we have. The world sees that we are special as well, and they expect us to keep to higher standards.

Indeed when our faith is tested over and over again, through struggles, suffering and letdowns, we have it in us to remain strong in our faith and belief.

We know that G-d is in control and that He knows what He is doing. We understand that every setback is really a stepping stone to something much better.

The second lesson is that when we realize we are wrong, we should ask for forgiveness. And when someone sincerely asks us for forgiveness, we should forgive immediately. The copper snake was placed on a staff so that people had to look up to it—lifting their eyes toward our Father in Heaven. This symbolizes the essence of who we are as a people: we are connected to Hashem and recognize that everything comes from Him. When we truly understand that, miracles and victories begin to unfold.

This Torah portion reflects the story of our lives—the struggles, the suffering, the miracles, and the triumphs. The most important thing is to keep our focus on G-d.

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.

Tanya in Quarantine

By Rabbi Mendel Rubin

Rabbi Meir Shlomo Yanofsky was the Rebbe's maternal grandfather. He lived in Nikolayev, (known in Ukraine as Mykolayev) a southern Ukraine city then part of Russia/ Soviet Union. Nikolayev is a famous beloved city in Chabad lore thanks to the many classic beautiful Chassidic melodies that came from there and for it being the birthplace of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1902. But this is a story about his grandfather, in the late 19th or early 20th century.

R' Meir Shlomo came down with a life-threatening illness, either typhus or tuberculosis, for which (back then) there wasn't proper medical treatment for it aside for quarantine with limited care. Somehow his friend, R' Asher Grossman, also known as R' Asher Nikolayver, found his friend's place of isolation, and the window outside the bed where he lie between life and death. R' Asher would come each day, stand outside the window, and read aloud a piece of Tanya called "L'Haskilcha Bina" to his friend, day after day. He did not know if his friend could hear him, or what his reaction was, but he kept at it. And thankfully R' Meir Shlomo improved and recovered!

Later on, back to full health, R' Meir Shlomo told R' Asher, "your saying the Tanya outside my window saved my life!"

Look, it might have been the Tanya itself that was life-saving. The piece R' Asher was quoting from is a powerful letter of the Alter Rebbe about facing life's hardest challenges with courage and faith and a deep sense of trust. Or maybe it had nothing to do with the specific passage, but the fact that it was a daily dose of Torah and spiritual connection even under such circumstances.

Or on a human level, it might have been simply that sense of connection. A friend who did not forget him. New studies have shown the increasing extent of loneliness in our world today (even among young people with large numbers of social-media friends and followers). Medical studies have drawn correlation lines between loneliness and higher mortality rates. Loneliness has been dubbed an epidemic in (even or because of) our increasingly digitally connected world. Simply knowing that someone cares, that someone comes, the reaching out itself can be of tremendous life-sustaining value!

The person doesn't have to be in typhus/tuberculosis quarantine for us to be a R' Asher Grossman type of friend. It may not be a life or death situation. It's not always that extreme. But reaching out and small gestures can make a huge difference in the life of another.

SLICE OF LIFE

From Persia to the Promised Land: A Musician's Journey

Gabriel Shem

Early dawn of October 8, 2023, as sunlight began streaming through Isfahan's ancient streets, Gabriel Shem (Shamuelian) carefully packed his treasured Santur. The 24-year-old musician bid farewell to the only home he had ever known, embarking on a journey his ancestors had dreamed of for generations. Little did he know that his first welcome to Israel would be the wailing of air raid sirens rather than celebratory music.

Born in Isfahan, a historic city near Tehran, Gabriel was raised in a traditional Jewish household where faith and music were inseparable companions. "My father led the prayers in the synagogue, and his prayers were full of soul," Gabriel remembers with reverence. His own musical journey began at just six years old when a family friend introduced him to the Santur – an ancient string instrument often described as "the great-grandfather of the piano."

"I was mesmerized watching him strike the strings with two mallets," he recalls, his eyes brightening at the memory. By eight, Gabriel had begun learning to play, developing a passion that would eventually become his voice in a foreign land.

Growing up Jewish in Iran provided Gabriel with unique perspectives. "Being different, as a Jew among Muslims, makes you understand that you need to build your own personality," he reflects thoughtfully. "Being Jewish obligates you to be a living example to everyone." Despite religious differences, he found unexpected respect among his peers. "Young people in Iran have openness and a desire to listen and learn. As a musician, I felt they respected me greatly."

Jewish holidays in Iran carried their own distinctive character, particularly Passover. "In Iran, you can't get kosher-for-Passover food products, except for matzah and a few other items," Gabriel explains. "This limitation actually makes you feel the holiday more deeply." The community would unite, opening their homes to one another, creating a festive atmosphere that transcended material constraints.

As Gabriel matured, his connection to Israel strengthened mysteriously. "Whenever I heard the sound of Hebrew, I felt I recognized the language, even though I couldn't speak it," he confesses. This spiritual pull became so powerful that he purchased a ticket for October 8, 2023. Then, the unthinkable happened – the October 7 massacre in Israel. Despite understandable hesitations, "the intense desire to immigrate to Israel prevailed."

Gabriel's first hours in the Promised Land were anything but peaceful. "We arrived at my uncle's home, and after a few hours, we heard a siren," he remembers. "It was stressful. We immediately ran to the shelter." The experience left him questioning his momentous decision. "As a new immigrant who hadn't even slept one night in the country, it was terrible. I asked myself if I had really come to a good place." Today, with quiet conviction, he adds, "Now it's clear to me that I did."

After spending a year in dormitories while studying Hebrew, Gabriel settled in Holon, where he found not just a house but a true home. He continues performing with his Santur, sharing his experiences from Iran, his Jewish heritage, and his immigration journey with captivated Israeli audiences.

Music remains the bridge connecting his past and present. Gabriel composes original pieces and performs at private events and cultural workshops. He's formed a musical partnership with Israeli singer Omri Goren, creating a unique cultural fusion. "He brings the Israeli elements, I bring the Persian ones, and together we create something new that connects these worlds," Gabriel explains with evident pride.

This musical blending reflects his deeper understanding of both cultures. "In Iran, we sang many songs with Hebrew lyrics without really understanding their meaning," he notes with subtle irony. "Now I think to myself that if I were to go back there, I could explain it to everyone myself." When performing traditional songs, Gabriel experiences a profound dual connection: "Today, I say the words and sing them in Persian inside. That's how I feel connected."

Despite the ongoing conflict between his birthplace and his chosen homeland, Gabriel maintains an optimistic outlook. "Everyone in the world wants peace, and I say this as someone who knows both peoples – there and here," he insists with quiet authority. "Between Tehran and Holon, between the Santur and the piano, I feel a mission that strums the strings."

"Now I'm here, trying to connect, bring joy, and serve as a bridge," Gabriel says, his fingers gently dancing across the Santur's delicate strings. "I'm certain that the day will come when we can see peace between nations with our own eyes."

As Gabriel plays a haunting melody, his ancient instrument seems to whisper the collective story of his people – exile, longing, and finally, homecoming. It is a personal exodus that resonates across generations, from the shores of Persia to the promised shores of Israel, carried on the timeless strings of the Santur.

Adapted from Sichat Shavua

etc.

New Shluchim to Sonoma Valley, California

New Shluchim to Sonoma Valley, California California's Sonoma Valley is home to 63,000 acres of vineyard and no less than 425 wineries. And now, its 1,000 Jewish families have their own Chabad center.

Recently, Rabbi Mendel and Chaya Wenger, along with their daughters, Raizel and Hinda, established the Sonoma Valley Chabad Jewish Center. In a short time, they've connected with over 150 Jewish families and launched an impressive array of programs: a welcoming Baby Café, Jewish Cinema nights, the Sonoma Jewish Academy, CTeen activities, weekly Shabbat meals and joyous holiday celebrations.

They're also thrilled to begin offering kosher catering so Jewish travelers can experience Sonoma's legendary hospitality while maintaining their kosher observance.

ETHICS CHAPTER FIVE

The world was created with ten utterances. What does this come to teach us? Certainly, it could have been created with a single utterance. However, this is in order to make the wicked accountable for destroying a world that was created with ten utterances, and to reward the righteous for sustaining a world that was created with ten utterances.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d

Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5736 [August 27, 1976]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To The Jewish Mothers and Daughters everywhere,

G-d bless you --

Blessing and Greeting:

In view of the recent events — the hijacking and saving of the hostages held in Uganda; and the subsequent attempt of the terrorists to perpetrate a vicious reprisal, G-d forbid, in Kushta (Istanbul),

It should be understood that these events are an indication that Jews must, at the earliest possible, strengthen all aspects of their security and defenses — first and foremost in their spiritual life, which is the channel to receive G-d's blessings also in the physical aspect, namely, to know the right ways and means that have to be undertaken in the natural order of things, and to fully succeed in these efforts, in accordance with the Divine promise, "G-d, your G-d, will bless you in all that you do" -- to be protected and secured from enemies, and to be spared any undesirable happenings, G-d forbid.

The above events remind each and all of our Jewish brethren in general, and Jewish mothers and daughters in particular — since every married Jewish woman is called Akeres Habayis, "Foundation of the Home," and those not yet married are to be Akeres Habayis, for which they must prepare themselves from tender age — the following:

The present situation calls for the protection of every Jewish home. True protection is that which only G-d provides, as it is written, "G-d guards the city." To ensure this Divine guardianship, the home has to be conducted in all aspects according to G-d's will.

Then the home is also an abode for the Shechinah (G-d's Presence), in accordance with His promise, "I will dwell among them."

In addition to this, G-d has given our people a special gift wherewith to protect the home, namely, the Mitzvah of Mezuzah. Our Sages declare explicitly that "the home is protected by it (the Mezuzah)."

Moreover, this protection embraces the members of the household also when they go out of the house, as it is written, 'G-d will guard your going and your coming from now and forever.' It is further explained in our holy sources that the Divine Name (Shin-Dalet-Yud) written on the back of the sacred Mezuzah parchment spells out the words, "Shomer Dalsos Yisroel — Guardian of Jewish Doors."

Let it also be remembered that inasmuch as all Jews constitute one body, and are bound up with one another, every Mezuzah is a Divine protection not only for the individual home, with everybody and everything in it, but each additional kosher Mezuzah that is affixed on a doorpost of any Jewish home, anywhere, adds to the protection of all our people everywhere.

And considering — as mentioned above — that every Jewish housewife is an Akeres Habayis, and every Jewish girl a future Akeres Habayis, they have a special Zechus (merit) and responsibility in the matter of Mezuzah, to see to it that not only a kosher Mezuzah be affixed on every doorpost in their home that is required to have a Mezuzah, but that the same be done by their Jewish neighbors and friends, and in all Jewish homes.

I hope and pray that you will do this with inspiration and joy, which, in addition to increasing the Hatzlocho [success] in this effort, will also inspire many others to do likewise, and the Zechus Horabim [the merit you brought to the many] will further stand you in good stead.

The present time is particularly auspicious for this endeavor, as for endeavors in all matters of goodness and holiness, since we are in the beginning of the month of Elul — the month of spiritual stocktaking, to complete the deficiencies of the outgoing year and to prepare for the New Year, that it be a good and blessed year for each and all of us and for our Jewish people as a whole.

With esteem and blessing of Kesivo veChasimo Tovah,

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Since the day the Temple was destroyed, an individual was born who is worthy because of his righteousness to be the redeemer, and when the time comes G-d will appear to him and send him, just as G-d appeared to Moses

(Chatam Sofer-Likutim, ch. 98).

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'chaim Publication.

From the Archives

This coming Tuesday is the 12th of Tamuz. On this day in 1927, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, o.b.m., was informed he would be released from prison.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok had been imprisoned by the anti-religious Communist regime for his efforts to strengthen Torah and Judaism in Russia. Originally he was sentenced to death; later, through American intervention it was commuted to three years in exile and finally all charges were dropped.

It is told that KGB agents once burst into his home, "warning" him to stop his work. "My activities are legal according to Soviet law. I see no reason to stop them," he calmly replied. One of the agents waved a gun at him.

"This little toy has made many a man change his mind!" "This little toy," retorted the Rebbe, "can intimidate only a man with two gods and one world. I, however, have one G-d and two worlds."

Such was the indomitable spirit of the previous Rebbe, leader of Russian Jewry and staunch champion of the conviction that America could also become a center for Torah and Jewish life.

The life of this great leader can be inspiring for us, today. Let us emulate the unflinching, resolute determination of the previous Rebbe, in all matters pertaining to our "one G-d and two worlds."

And let us each do all we can to continue the work of the Rebbe, in strengthening Torah and Judaism all over the world. Then, the celebration of the 12th of Tamuz will be not just someone else's day of liberation, but indeed our very own.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חי'ה 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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