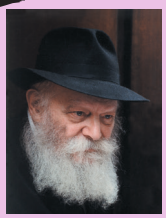
בס"ד

L'Chaim

1904
6 Tevet, 5786
December 26, 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 L-rd, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalms 124:8)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, dramatically reveals his true identity to his incredulous brothers. Joseph reassures them that the entire sequence of events, beginning with his being sold into slavery to his eventual rise to power, was the hand of G-d guiding him from above. "It was not you who sent me here, but G-d," he tells his brothers. Joseph then asks them to carry the following message back to their father, Jacob: "G-d has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me (to Egypt); do not tarry."

At first glance, Joseph's choice of words seems odd. If Joseph's intent was merely to convince Jacob to undertake the lengthy journey, why would he imagine that his elderly father would be swayed by the news that his son now occupied a high political office?

Rather, Jacob knew that the Jewish people was destined to go into exile in Egypt. When informed of Joseph's rise to power, he understood that this was an integral part of that process. Once that stage was reached it was time for Jacob to follow and the next phase to begin.

Many years before, G-d had explained the objective of the exile in Egypt: "Afterwards (after the exile), they will emerge with great wealth," G-d promised Abraham. Under Joseph's tenure, Egypt was transformed into a wealthy nation. In exchange for the food he had so cleverly stockpiled, Joseph collected much of the world's riches-all done in order for the Jews to eventually depart Egypt "with great wealth." Indeed, the accumulation of wealth was one of the prime reasons behind the entire 210-year exile.

Yet the concept of "great wealth" must be understood on a deeper level as well, not only in the literal sense. The material riches accumulated by the Jewish people was only a reflection of the great spiritual wealth with which they left Egypt. For the Jews were sent into exile for the purpose of extracting and refining the sparks of holiness hidden within the most morally degraded and degenerate place on earth - Egypt. Those sparks of purity, once freed from their prison within Egypt's "49 gates of impurity," were the ultimate riches derived by the Jews during their exile.

The accumulation of "wealth" is likewise the purpose of our present exile as well - extracting the good from the corporeal world and transforming it into holiness by utilizing physical objects for the purpose of Torah and mitzvot.

This process is now complete. Over the thousands of years of exile, the Jewish people have uncovered and elevated all of these sparks of holiness, dispersed throughout the four corners of the earth. According to Divine plan, the time has therefore come for G-d to fulfill His promise and send Moshiach, NOW!

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Spirituality of the Living Hostages Return

By Rabbi Mendel Rubin

The return of the remaining 20 living hostages after two years of terror captivity in Gaza, under unthinkable conditions was a source of tremendous joy and relief to all of Israel and all of us around the world. There's obviously still a lot ahead for these hostages' healing but this is a tremendous milestone and cause for great happiness.

The actual date of their return was on Hoshana Rabba, the last day of Sukkot, a day of extended prayer and supplication, some consider it an extension of Yom Kippur. And it was one day prior to the Hebrew anniversary of Shemini Atzeret (Simchat Torah in Israel) two years to date of their tragic capture during the horrific Hamas attacks of October 7th. May their continued return to light and life be one of happiness and blessings and success.

As they were reunited with their families, one striking aspect for me was the prevalence of spirituality and Jewish tradition captured in these long-awaited emotional reunions.

A biblical scene played out, recalling the reunification of Jacob with his long-lost but never-forgotten son Joseph when Mr. Ohana was reunited with his son Yosef Chaim Ohana. As he greeted his son with tremendous emotion, he called out the verse of "Shema Yisrael" just as Jacob did when he saw Joseph. A biblical Midrash coming to life in 2025! And being the last day of Sukkot, one of the very first things the newly freed hostage Ohana asked for was a Lulav and Etrog to make the blessing and perform the mitzvah! Just imagine….

Matan Zanguaker described a discovery of a worn book of Psalms he came across in Gaza. How he treasured that find, and how he prayed from it daily and how it gave him encouragement.

Rom Braslavski was a hostage whose emaciated videos were released as Hamas propaganda and psychological torture during his long ordeal.

His family described how prayer steadied him, how it reinforced him even when limited food and deprived sleep could not. It was a lifeline he clutched in his darkest times. He spoke of how they pressured him to convert to Islam for better treatment and how he resisted and drew strength from his Jewish identity – even under such circumstances!

When Segev Kalfon's relatives first saw him, they responded to his embrace with the traditional blessing of "Shehechiyanu" said at milestone Jewish moments like holidays and rare mitzvot.

And many more…

Of course, the point is not just to tell these stories about them – but also as an inspiration and lesson for all of us. We can all learn and personally apply a great deal from witnessing this.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Glimpse of Chabad of Peachtree City, GA, with Rabbi Yossi and Shternie Lew

By Chaya Chazan

Rabbi Lew in front of the Ice Menorah at a community Chanukah celebration

Our shlichus "story" was a series of twists and turns spanning many years and three different states. It exemplifies what the life of a shliach is truly about - doing what needs to be done, when and where ever needed.

We started off in Long Island as a young married couple, when Chabad in the area was just getting started. After a while, we moved onto the school in New Haven, Connecticut. A few months later, we were invited to Atlanta, where we helped build the Chabad community.

After nineteen successful years, we were offered an opportunity we couldn't resist - to start a new community in nearby Peachtree City. Baruch Hashem, we are now approaching our thirteenth year in this shlichus.

Peachtree City is a beautiful and verdant city, flanked by tranquil rivers. In true Southern fashion, everyone is friendly and neighborly, and there's a sizable Jewish population.

Slowly but surely, we made inroads. Soon, we had a dedicated group regularly attending shul every week.

Our journey took us on a frightening and unexpected turn when I developed life-threatening complications from Covid and was hospitalized for an extended period. Even after Hashem miraculously saved me, my recovery was long and difficult.

We began our shlichus all over again, as we'd done many times before. We had to start from the ground up, introducing ourselves and our mission to the community, meeting Jews, forming friendships, and slowly rebuilding our minyan.

Once a week, I serve as the chaplain in Atlanta's International Airport. My job requires me to walk around the concourse, be present for the busy passengers rushing by, and see if there's anyone I can help.

Once, I got a call from a brother and sister who were waiting in the airport on a layover for a flight home for their father's funeral. He'd passed very suddenly, and they hadn't had time to organize themselves or even pack food! They asked if I'd be able to provide them with any kosher food.

I immediately stuffed a bag full of sandwiches and snacks and delivered it to their gate.

Since then, I've worked to put kosher food in the airport, and baruch Hashem, it's now possible for any Jewish traveler to pick up a delicious kosher meal along their way.

One day, a woman entered the busy terminal, her face creased with confusion and anxiety. I overheard her asking a passing worker for directions to her concourse, and although he told her exactly where to go, I could see she still looked dazed and at a loss.

"Excuse me, maam," I said, "you seem upset. Is there anything I can do?"

She burst into tears. Through her sobs, she told me how her mother had recently passed, and before she'd even begun to process that loss, her sister was diagnosed with a terminal illness. She told me how she hated airports, and was perpetually confused by them, but decided to brave them to go see her sister.

"I can take you to your gate," I told her, kindly. "Just follow me."

I led her through an admittedly dizzying array of escalators, trains, and moving sidewalks until we reached her gate.

"Who are you?" she asked, looking at me in dazed wonderment.

I laughed. "I'm the Jewish chaplain here. Have you ever met a Jew before?"

"No," she admitted. "But this is a great first experience! I can't believe how much you went out of your way to help a total stranger!"

We were lucky enough to find a property with two detached garages. One was kept for personal use, but the other became our shul. Almost immediately, we saw that it was too small for our needs. But at that point of our shlichus, we simply couldn't afford to buy a property.

When a neighbor mentioned a house a couple of blocks away that had gone into foreclosure and was being offered for pennies, it seemed too good to be true. The property was close to our house, large enough to allow for expansion down the road, and the price was almost laughable. I told my agent to contact the bank immediately! He told me the bank was already under negotiation with a company, although no contracts had been signed.

I couldn't pass up on this golden opportunity, but even though the price was incredibly low, it was still a sum I didn't have. How could I raise that much quickly enough to compete with the other company? I sat at my desk and opened my calendar, noticing I had a lunch appointment with a wealthy philanthropist. The meeting had been scheduled months before, but the timing was prescient.

As I drove to the meeting, a friend messaged me that he was in Alma Atta, about to enter the resting place of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, the Rebbe's father. He offered to write a note on my behalf, and I gratefully took him up on the offer.

After we chatted and made some small talk, the philanthropist got right down to it. "What's going on, Rabbi?"

"Actually, a lot!" I answered, and explained the whole story.

"Sure," he agreed, almost casually. "I'll buy it."

I was amazed. I hadn't even planned to ask him for the whole sum, and here he'd offered it of his own volition!

There were a couple more ups and downs, but, baruch Hashem, with Hashem's kindness and the Rebbe's brachos, we were able to purchase the property. It serves as our Chabad house, shul, and event center, and is as perfect as we imagined it would be.

**Names changed to protect privacy*

Excerpts from www.dollardaily.org

etc.

A New Chapter for Croatia's Jews

Rabbi Pini and Raizy Zaklas moved to Croatia in 2004 to establish the first Chabad center on "the land of a thousand islands." Coming from their native Israel, it took time for them to come to terms with the fear and secrecy of the Jewish community there.

"We spent the first decade just earning their trust," said Raizy. "We had to put our grand ambitions aside and choose an individualized approach, fostering relationships through one-on-one meetings at coffee shops.

"Today, there is a burgeoning young generation of Jews. We have children in Hebrew School. Young moms joining women's events. College students attending Torah classes. We are constantly adapting to meet their needs, and thank G-d, the future looks bright."

WHATS IN A NAME

MESHULAM means "complete." Meshulam (Nehemiah 8:4) returned with Ezra and Nechemia to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile. According to the Midrash, Meshulam was another name for Zecharia, whose deeds were "complete." Another Meshulam was a sixth century b.c.e. scribe (II Kings 22:3).

MACHLA means "fat." Machla (Num. 36:11) was one of the five daughters of Tzelafchad, and lived while the Jews were in the desert. Tzelafchad had no sons, so Machla and her sisters lobbied to receive their father's inheritance in the Land of Israel. Moses was consulted and brought the matter before G-d. A command was established in their merit for all time.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

5 Teves, 5736 [1976]

In reply to your inquiry and request for instructions in connection with the forthcoming fast of Asara b'Teves (10th of Teves), in view of the situation in and around Israel -

You will surely be instructed by the rabbi of your congregation, however, since you have also approached me in this matter, I will set forth, at least, several suggestions - after the following introductory remarks:

Regrettably, there are people who claim that it is necessary to think and act "big," in terms of global dimensions and stupendous undertakings, etc. Surely they mean well; and to the extent that such resolutions are practical and are actually carried out - they are very helpful in improving the situation.

Yet, we must never overlook - indeed, rather greatly emphasize - the so-called "small and unsophisticated" things which each modest congregation, moreover each individual, can and must do - beginning with the old, yet ever-new, Jewish way, collectively as one people and also as individuals. This is the action of "the voice is the voice of Jacob" - Torah and prayer - which G-d Himself has shown us to be the first effective action to nullify the power of "the hands of Esau" - in whatever shape or form they are raised against us.

Certainly this should find the fullest expression in a day which the Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law] declares to be a day of fasting, one to which the prophet Isaiah refers as a "chosen fast...a fast and time favored by G-d."

Now, in answer to your inquiry, and since the fast of Asara b'Teves is specially connected with the Holy Land and the Holy City of Jerusalem (recalling the siege of Jerusalem), my suggestion - in addition to the regular "obser-vances" on fast days, as set forth at length and in detail in Poskim [Jewish legal adjudicators] and in books of Mussar and Chasidism - is as follows:

During this day - expressly for the sake (zechus) of the security and strengthening of the Holy Land, materially and spiritually, and for the material and spiritual benefit of all Jews wherever they are - in the Holy Land as well as in the Diaspora - and particularly for the benefit of our brethren behind the "Iron Curtain" - a special effort should be made in the spirit of "Old Israel" - in the areas of Torah study, prayer and charity.

Especially after praying (both in the morning and at Mincha - the afternoon service) one should learn (and where there already are daily study groups, to add) a subject in Torah, including halacha pesuka (final ruling).

Immediately following the prayers, even before learning, one should say several chapters of Psalms (in addition to the regular portion).

Before and after praying - one should give charity (in addition to the regular donation), including charity for a sacred cause or institution in the Holy Land, the "Land of Living."

Needless to say, one who repeats the above again and again in the course of the day is to be praised.

And the more one does it (in quantity and quality), the more praiseworthy it is.

And, as in all matters of holiness, it is desirable that all the above be done with at least a minyan (quorum).

May G-d accept, and He will accept, the prayers and supplications of Jews wherever they are.

And soon, in our very own days, may the promise be fulfilled that "These days will be transformed into days of rejoicing and gladness," with the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

All the fast days connected to the destruction of the Holy Temple are destined to be abolished in the time of the Moshiach; indeed, they are destined to be turned into festive days, days of rejoicing and gladness, in accordance with the verse (Zech. 8:19), "Thus says the L-rd of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month ... and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful seasons...."

(Laws of Fast Days 5:19)

"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 we commemorate the start of the siege of Jersualem by Nebuchadnezar, King of Babylonia. The siege resulted in the eventual destruction of the First Holy Temple nearly 2500 years ago. This day is commemorated as a public fast day.

The strength - both of the obligation to fast and its positive influences - of the Tenth of Tevet stems from the fact that it commemorates the first of the tragedies associated with the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Thus this date begins the process of destruction. It is well known that the beginning of any process contains more power than the subsequent stages and for this reason, there is added power to the Tenth of Tevet. The positive influences of the Tenth of Tevet are connected to the fact that a fast day is a "day of will" when our prayers and teshuva are more willingly accepted by G-d.

As we are taught that "the beginning is wedged in the end," and the ultimate "end" purpose of the destruction of the Holy Temples will be the rebuilding of the Third and Eternal Holy Temple, the Tenth of Tevet is an auspicious day to hasten the coming of the Redemption.

Of course, our most fervent prayer is that the Tenth of Tevet not be a day of mourning but be turned into a day of celebration and joy with the coming of Moshiach. Thus, by our immediate decision to increase our acts of goodness and kindness, our performance of mitzvot, study of Torah, and specifically the giving of charity, which brings the Redemption closer, we are showing G-d that our actions are in consonance with our heartfelt prayers. May the realization of those prayers happen in the immediate future.

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.

Published by
Lubavitch Youth Organization
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213
phone 718 778 6000

Chairman	Rabbi Dovid Raskin ז"ל
Director	Rabbi Shmuel Butman ז"ל
Publishing Director	Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
Program Director	Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
Secretary	Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
Administrator	Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
Layout	Rivky Laufer
Associate Editor	Dovid Y. B. Kaufmann ז"ל
Chairman Editorial Comm.	Rabbi Nissen Mangel
Rebbe photo	S. Roumani

L'Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard.

All contents © 2025 by L.Y.O.

ISSN 1050 0480

L'Chaim Subscriptions
For a one year regular or gift subscription, send $55, payable to LYO ($60 elsewhere) to: L'Chaim, 1408 President St., Bklyn., NY, 11213
Please call our office before sending in any subscriptions.

Learn about Moshiach
Visit www.moshiach.com or call (718) 953 6100

IT HAPPENED ONCE

The Rizhiner Rebbe, Rabbi Yisroel of Rizhin, was the great-grandson of the Maggid of Mezritch. (The Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber, was the disciple and successor of Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement.)

The Rizhiner Rebbe had inherited his great-grandfather's tefilin, and when the Rizhiner Rebbe passed away, his six sons all wanted this most precious possession. The brothers decided to cast lots and David Moshe was the winner.

A number of years passed. Rabbi Avraham Yaakov, the oldest son of the Rizhiner Rebbe, was now renown as the Rebbe of Sadigura. One day, the Sadigura Rebbe mentioned to his Chasidim that he had wanted to have the special tefilin inherited by his brother, Rabbi David Moshe.

A young Chasid revealed in a trembling voice, "Knowing how much the Rebbe had wanted the Maggid's tefilin, my friend and I traveled to Rabbi David Moshe's home and secretly took the parchments out of the tefilin boxes and replaced them with perfectly kosher parchments. We meant no harm to the Rebbe's brother and only hoped to please the Rebbe. Afterwards we had second thoughts but now that we heard how much the Rebbe had wanted the Maggid's tefilin, we have decided to tell the Rebbe what we did."

The Chasidim who heard this confession trembled in disbelief. How could these two do such a dreadful thing?! On the other hand, if Rabbi David Moshe remained unaware, then perhaps the tefilin really weren't intended for him?

The Sadigura Rebbe unwrapped the parchments, looked them over care-fully, lovingly rewrapped them in his silk kerchief and put them away. "We will go visit my brother," said the Rebbe.

When the Sadigura Rebbe and his Chasidim arrived in Potick, his brother welcomed them graciously. The following morning, Rabbi David Moshe took his brother into a private room, where they were to pray together. On the table lay three pairs of tefilin next to each other - Rashi, Rabbeinu Tam and Shimusha Rabba. A little further away was another pair of tefilin in a bag that the Sadigura Rebbe recognized as the Maggid's tefilin.

Rabbi David Moshe held the Maggid's tefilin with eyes closed in contemplation. Then he sighed and put them down. He put on his own Rashi tefilin and began to pray. Afterwards, he put on the other two pairs of tefilin.

When they finished praying, the Sadigura Rebbe asked his brother why he did not put on the saintly Maggid's tefilin. Rabbi David Moshe sighed again. "I have not put them on since one morning when I picked them up and did not feel their holiness. This could only mean that I am no longer worthy to put them on." Rabbi David Moshe continued, saying, "I want you to have these tefilin. I am sure that you are worthier than I."

The Sadigura Rebbe said, "These tefilin truly are meant for you." And he proceeded to tell his brother what had happened. Upon finishing, the Sadigura Rebbe took out his silk kerchief and handed it to his brother. "I am sure that as soon as you replace these in their boxes, you will once again feel their holiness."

Soon afterwards, Rabbi David Moshe moved to Tchortkow and became famous as the Tchortkower Rebbe. When he felt that his soul would return to his Maker, he called in his only son, Yisrael. "I am leaving the Maggid's tefilin to you as an inheritance. Cherish them and guard them well," he told his son.

Rabbi Yisrael used the Maggid's tefilin only twice each year, on Purim and on the eve of Yom Kippur. On all other days, Rabbi Yisrael used his own tefilin. During WWI, Rabbi Yisrael and his family had to leave their home in Tchortkow in great haste. In the sudden rush, the tefilin were left behind. Rabbi Yisrael was heartbroken, but there was nothing he could do. He and his family found refuge in Lvov. When the Russians threatened Lvov, they moved to Vienna to await the end of the war. Several years later, the Russians were driven out of Galicia, and Tchortkow was liberated. Although he tried, Rabbi Yisrael was not able to return to Tchortkow to look for the Maggid's tefilin.

When the war was finally over, Rabbi Yisrael was visited by a Jewish POW. The soldier took out a tefilin bag from his rucksack and handed it to Rabbi Yisrael. Lovingly the Rebbe kissed the tefilin. In a trembling voice, he said, "I always knew that somehow these tefilin would return to me. You have done the great mitzva (commandment) of returning a lost item. Where did you get these?"

The soldier began, "I was serving in the Russian army. When we were chasing the Austrians we reached Tchortkow. I had been to Tchortkow as a child; my father was a chasid of the Rebbe. I recognized the Rebbe's house and I saw soldiers ransacking it. I went inside. I could feel that one room was permeated with holiness. I searched in the debris and found this tefilin bag!"

Continued the soldier, "I survived the war due to many miracles, which I attribute to the fact that the tefilin were in my possession. I was captured and became a prisoner of war. I was recently released and am now on my way home. My first stop was to find the Rebbe and bring him his tefilin."

"G-d will surely reward you for your great mitzva. And for the great pleasure that you have brought me, I insist that you be my guest for a few days. Please wait a moment while I go ask my attendant to make the arrangements."

The Rebbe spoke with his attendant and then went back into his room, but the soldier was nowhere to be seen. The Rebbe called in his attendant and told him, "Quickly, bring the soldier back who just left my room!"

"I did not see anyone leave the Rebbe's room," the attendant answered.

Dedicated in honor of dear friend
of the L'chaim Publication
Mark Halberstam, ESQ

to dedicate an issue
call (718) 778 6000

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt... I will go down with you... and I will bring you up again (Gen. 46:3-4)
Jacob was not sent into exile alone; G-d descended with him and guarded him there. Jacob possessed a comprehensive soul that included the souls of all Jews. "Jacob" thus stands for every single Jew, and his descent into Egypt alludes to Israel's descent into exile. Thus it follows that even now we are not alone, and that G-d will mercifully hasten the Final Redemption with Moshiach, as it states, "I will also bring you up again." *(Torat Menachem)*

.He sent Judah before him to Joseph, to direct him to Goshen (Gen. 46:28)
Our Sages explain that Judah was dispatched to Egypt before everyone else "in order to establish a house of learning...that the tribes be able to study Torah-Hogim baTorah." Jacob understood that their sojourn in as corrupt a place as Egypt would pose a threat to the spirituality of the Jewish people, and thus prepared the antidote before their arrival. The word "hogim" implies a study so deep and comprehensive that the Torah actually becomes part of the person. Moshiach is therefore described as "hogeh baTorah," for the power to redeem the Jewish people from exile can only come from one whose entire existence is absolutely unified with the Torah itself. *(Hitvaaduyot 5750)*

Then Judah came near to him (Gen. 44:18)
The word "came near" - vayigash, implies that Judah and Joseph came very close. Many years later the descendants of Judah and Joseph split, and formed two separate kingdoms. Vayigash alludes to the time of the Redemption when we ill unite as one kingdom under one king, Moshiach. *(Bereishit Rabba)*

4:17 PM *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
6 Tevet / December 26
Torah Portion *Vayigash*
Shabbat ends **5:21 PM**