



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

Reb Leib Sarah's, one of the greatest of the Baal Shem Tov's disciples, had long desired to live in the Holy Land. After years of struggle, of wandering, of perfecting himself to the utmost of his ability, his deepest desire was to settle in the Holy Land, there to be able to attain spiritual achievements unreachable elsewhere.

Although he was himself a person of renown, he was also a chasid, and so, he went to his rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, to ask his permission and blessing for the trip. "Rebbe," he asked, "I request your permission to settle in the Holy Land, which is my heart's desire." But, to his surprise, the Besht's reply was negative. The next year Leib Sarah's again went to his rebbe with the same petition. But, again, the Besht denied his request, without even an explanation. This scenario repeated itself year after year for several years, and Leib Sarah's was deeply disappointed.

One year he decided that he wouldn't go to his rebbe at all; he just wouldn't ask. The desire to travel and settle in the Holy Land had become so strong within him, that he could no longer deny it. So, Leib Sarah's sat down with his wife and then with his children and discussed the question of moving to the Holy Land, there to perfect his soul in the service of his Maker. His wife and children were all agreeable, and so it was decided to go. Wasting no time, he sold all of his worldly goods save the barest necessities, and gathering all of his money, he bought tickets for himself, his wife and children for the long journey to the Land of Israel.

When everything was in order, Reb Leib Sarah's packed up his belongings and set off with his family through Russia toward Turkey, whence he would travel to Israel. It was a slow and arduous journey overland with many stops in the small towns and villages through which they had to travel. One day they came to a small town and noticed some sort of excitement in the town. Leib Sarah's inquired of the villagers, and was shocked when he heard their reply. For none other than the famous Baal Shem Tov was unexpectedly visiting the town, and the people were overwhelmed by the great honor of receiving such a personage.

Leib Sarah's was even more overwhelmed by his own dilemma. He thought of the possibility of not going to greet his rebbe, thereby avoiding any embarrassment because of his disobedience, but how could he not acknowledge the presence of his great rebbe and teacher? He sat in his wagon deliberating, when suddenly he had no choice, for the Baal Shem Tov's carriage pulled up next to his own. Reb Leib Sarah's dismounted and approached the rebbe. The Besht appeared to be surprised and asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Rebbe, please forgive me for not heeding your words, but I am now on my way to settle in the Holy Land."

The Besht replied, "Well, if your wish to go is so strong, then go. But now, where are you going to spend the Shabbat?"

"I am just now searching for a place, but it's difficult since I spent all of my money on the tickets for the journey," replied Reb Leib. The Baal Shem Tov offered to host Reb Leib and his family for the whole Shabbat. When they were in their rooms preparing for the arrival of the holy day, the Besht knocked on Reb Leib's door, asking if he had immersed in the mikva yet. "No," he replied, "I have no money remaining, so I will forego the mikva this week." To this, the Baal Shem Tov replied that he would pay the entrance fee for him, and they should go together to the mikva. Reb Leib Sarah's joy was unbounded, for he understood the profound meaning of the immersion and was relieved not to miss his usual ritual.

Upon arriving at the mikva the Besht said, "Reb Leib, you go first." But, he refused, saying, "Please, Rebbe, you go; you are my teacher, after all." The Besht was adamant, and Reb Leib immersed first. After the proscribed immersions were completed, he rose from the water, turned to his rebbe and said, "I have changed my mind. I will not go to the Holy Land. I will return to Medzibozh, to you. Let

me tell you what I saw in the mikva during my immersions. As I entered the water I saw a continent. As I looked closely I saw Eretz Israel, and as I looked even more closely I saw Jerusalem. As I narrowed my focus still more, I could see all the parts of the Temple Mount, even the Holy Temple itself. Then I looked inside and saw the Holy of Holies, but though I strained my eyes as hard as I could, I couldn't see the Holy Ark, the Tablets of the Law, or the Divine Presence. In my anguish I cried out, "Where are the Tablets? Where is the Divine Presence? But a Heavenly Voice answered me, saying, 'They are found in Medzibozh.' Therefore, I am following you back to Medzibozh to fulfill my Divine Service. I now see that during the exile, the Divine Presence dwells with the leader of the generation."

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

**And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for 17 years (Gen. 47:28)**

When the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, was a child, he learned a commentary on this verse that these 17 years were the best years of Jacob's life. This surprised the boy, and he went to his grandfather, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, to find out how it was possible that the years spent in such a spiritually corrupt and abominable land could have been Jacob's best.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman replied: Before Jacob descended into Egypt, he sent an emissary to establish yeshivot and places of learning. Whenever and wherever a Jew learns Torah, he cleaves to G-d and achieves a true and meaningful life. Furthermore, precisely because Egypt was such an abominable place, the holiness and spirituality Jacob attained there shone that much brighter against the dark and evil background of his surroundings. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

**With you shall Israel bless...May G-d make you as Ephraim and Menashe (48:20)**

In the previous verses Jacob had said, "Ephraim and Menashe shall be to me as Reuven and Shimon." Despite the fact that Ephraim and Menashe were born in exile and were educated in Egypt, a land not conducive to Torah learning and Judaism, they were still as righteous and pure as Reuven and Shimon, who grew up in more enclosed and insular surroundings in Jacob's household.

(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

**And let my name be called on them, and the name of my fathers (48:16)**

Jacob blessed his grandsons, Menashe and Ephraim, by expressing his wish that they grow up to be a source of pride to the family.

When, G-d forbid, children do not follow in their parents' footsteps and stray from the proper path, the grandparents and parents are ashamed that the children bear their name. Jacob blessed his grandsons that they should be worthy of being called the descendents of Abraham and Isaac.



### 4:18 Candle Lighting Time

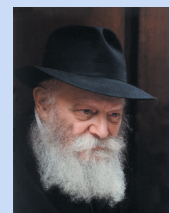
NY Metro Area  
 26 Kislev / December 27  
 Torah Portion Miketz  
 Blessing of the new month of Tevet  
 Shabbat ends 5:22 PM

בס"ד  
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**The Weekly Publication  
 for Every Jewish Person**  
 נוסד תור ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson  
 "To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven" (Psalm 123:1)

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

Last week's Torah portion dealt with the subject of dreams—those of Joseph and Pharaoh's officers. This week, in the Torah portion of Miketz, we continue to delve into dreams, but this time, those of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

The common denominator shared by all these dreams is that they collectively portrayed the various stages and factors which caused Jacob and his sons to go to Egypt. As a direct result, the Jewish people were exiled there.

Every word in the Torah is necessary and precise. If the subject of dreams receives so much emphasis and we are told such a wealth of detail, there must be a fundamental connection between the concept of dreams and the concept of exile. Furthermore, by understanding the significance of dreams, we will be better able to overcome the difficulties we endure during our own prolonged exile.

Chasidic philosophy explains that a most outstanding characteristic of dreams is the ability for diametrically opposed opposites to coexist, something which cannot take place in reality. The Talmud gives as an example the image of "an elephant passing through the eye of a needle," which may appear not at all out of the ordinary in a dream.

This is also true of our own exile, an unnatural and abnormal situation, but one seemingly natural and normal to us. It is of such long duration, we can no longer feel the contradictions inherent in the galut itself.

The same contradictions also apply to our spiritual galut. It is understood that self-love and the pursuit of worldly pleasures are the opposite of cultivating a love of G-d and holiness. Yet, we often perform mitzvot under the illusion that we are doing so out of love of G-d and are in close proximity to Him, all the while caring only for our own egos and self-fulfillment. We simply don't perceive the contradiction in this.

Another example of our lack of logic is found in prayer. While praying, the Jew's innate love and emotional attachment to G-d can be aroused, but as soon as he finishes, it is as if he had never experienced this arousal as he returns to his preoccupation with day-to-day life. Although he stood on such a high spiritual level while actually communing with G-d, the feelings dissipate as the individual finds himself led after the cravings of the animal soul.

Thus our very lives are lived as if we are dreaming. The spiritual exile is full of contradictions, yet we must not be discouraged and think that we perform mitzvot and pray in vain, for every positive deed leaves its mark even if its influence is not always easily felt.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Wake Up Calls

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Not everyone is lucky enough to get a wake-up call in life. Some people get theirs just in time. Others get it but don't hear it. Still others hear it loud and clear but refuse to take any notice.

Pharaoh got his in this week's parashah, when Yosef interpreted his dreams and advised him to appoint "a wise and discerning man" who would oversee a macroeconomic plan for the country. Yosef explained to the king of Egypt that because he experienced two dreams and woke up in between, it was a sign from heaven to wake up and act immediately, as the matter was of the utmost urgency. Pharaoh took the message to heart, and the rest is history.

On the health-and-well-being level, a little cholesterol, climbing blood pressure, or recurring bronchitis might be the not-so-subtle signs that it's time for a change of lifestyle. These are the medical wake-up calls we receive in life. Do we really have to wait for a heart attack, G-d forbid, to stop smoking or to start eating less and exercising more? That's what wake-up calls are for: to help us get the message before it's too late.

Then there are the spiritual signs.

I will never forget a friend who shared with me the story of his own red lights flashing and how a changed spiritual lifestyle literally saved his life. He was

a workaholic driving himself to the brink. Had he carried on indefinitely he simply could not have survived. Then he decided to give Shabbat a try. What he had never previously appreciated about Shabbat was that it is a spiritually invigorating day of rest and spiritual serenity. And in discovering Shabbos, he rediscovered his humanity. (He also discovered he could play golf on Sundays instead of Saturdays.)

It's not easy to change ingrained habits. But Chanukah, which usually falls during Parashas Mikeitz, carries with it a relevant message in this regard: Take one day at a time. One doesn't have to do it all at once. One light at a time is all it takes. On the first night, we kindle a single Chanukah light; on the second night, two; and on the third night, three. We add a little light each day, and before long the menorah is complete and all eight Chanukah lights are burning bright.

It's okay to take one day at a time. It's not okay to go back to sleep after you get a wake-up call. Whether it's our medical well-being or our spiritual health, the occasional wake-up call is a valuable sign from Above that it may be time to adjust our attitudes, lifestyles, or priorities. Please G-d, each of us in our own lives will hear the call and act on the alarm bells with alacrity.

