

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion

Throughout the thousands of years of Jewish history, countless men, women and children have willingly given up their lives rather than deny their Jewishness. Not only scholars and learned Jews went to the auto-da-fe, with the "Shema" on their lips; simple and untutored Jews also chose to die sanctifying G-d's name without hesitation.

This irrational willingness to give up one's life for the sake of G-d seems odd in light of the dictum which states that "nothing can stand in the way of repentance." With the sword at their throats, who could have faulted our ancestors had they agreed to bow down to whatever idol worship was being forced upon them? Why didn't they save their lives by uttering some meaningless phrase or performing some other seemingly insignificant gesture demanded by their tormentors? Could they not have later fully repented and returned to G-d?

This question may be answered by understanding the special nature of the Jewish soul and the relationship it enjoys with G-d. That inner spark of Jewishness, described in Chasidut as "an actual part of G-d above," exists on a plane above time and space. It cannot bear to be severed from its Source for even a moment; the threat of separation from G-d is always utter and absolute. The willingness to give up one's life rather than lose that connection is a consequence of the soul's very nature.

This concept is well illustrated in this week's Torah portion, Bamidbar, in which G-d commands that a census be taken of the Jews. Rashi, the great Torah commentator, notes that because of the great love G-d has for His people, "He counts them at every moment."

This comment must be interpreted beyond its literal meaning, for since the exodus from Egypt, there have only been nine censuses of our people. The tenth census will be taken after the Final Redemption. What then, does it mean that G-d counts the Jews "at every moment"?

The act of counting reduces the objects being counted to their common denominator; both great and small are counted as one. The common denominator among all Jews, without regard for educational status, societal standing or wealth, is the Jewish soul, which exists in every Jew to the same extent and renders all Jews equal.

G-d unceasingly "counts" His children and holds each of them dear, all the time. This love is so overwhelming that the Jew cannot endure being cut off from it for even a moment, even with the knowledge that his later repentance has the power to restore the relationship to what it had been. It is G-d's perpetual "counting" of His children which reveals the innate power of the Jewish soul.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Keep Your Balance

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

What is the definition of a well-balanced individual? One who has a chip on both shoulders!

In Exodus we read the Ten Commandments. The great revelation at Sinai saw Moses come down the mountain bearing the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments engraved on them. As we know, the two tablets were divided into two columns—the one side was devoted to our responsibilities to G-d, such as faith and Shabbat, while the other side dealt with our interpersonal duties, e.g., no murder, adultery and thievery.

The message that so many seem to forget is that both these areas are sacred, both come directly from G-d, and both form the core of Torah law and what being Jewish is all about. We may not take the liberty of emphasizing one tablet over the other. A healthy, all-around Jew lives a balanced, wholesome life.

A good Jew is a well-balanced Jew. If you are "religious" towards G-d but not fair with people, you can become a fanatical fundamentalist blowing up people in the name of G-d! The same G-d who motivates and inspires us to be G-dly and adhere to a religious code also expects us to be a mentsch.

But neither can we neglect the right side of the tablets. A good Jew cannot simply be a democrat, a humanitarian. Otherwise, why did G-d need Jews altogether? To be good, moral, ethical and decent is the duty of every human

being on the planet. A good Jew must be a good person—and also fulfill our specific Jewish responsibilities, the mitzvahs that are uniquely Jewish.

I recently came across an interesting statistic on the Ten Commandments. The right-hand tablet, bearing the duties to G-d, consists of 146 words. The left-hand tablet, listing our human responsibilities, has only 26 words. Yet tradition has it that both tablets were filled with writing. There were no big, blank spaces. So how did 26 words equal the space of 146 words?

Well, anybody who uses a computer or word processor knows the answer. You simply adjust the font size. The 26 words on the left, reflecting our moral and ethical human responsibilities, were simply a bigger size than the 146 words on the right, reflecting our G-dly, religious responsibilities. So we must never underestimate the importance of the human-relations side of the Ten Commandments.

Then again, just so we don't start limping, the very same G-d who said we should be nice also said we should have faith, keep Shabbat (yes, it is one of the Big Ten), kosher, mikvah, and the rest of it.

As we read the Ten Commandments this week, let us resolve to keep our Jewish balance, not to limp or become "one-armed bandits." Please G-d, we will live full, wholesome, rich and well-balanced Jewish lives. Amen.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Lag BaOmer Celebrations Around the World A Celebration of Light, Joy and Unity



Large Lag BaOmer gathering in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY

Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day of the Omer count—this year, May 16, 2025—was celebrated, as it always is, as a festive day on the Jewish calendar that honors Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the Zohar. It was celebrated by communities around the world, with outings, bonfires, parades and other joyous events.

Beginning in the 1950s, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe encouraged Jewish children to join together in grand Lag BaOmer parades as a show of Jewish unity and pride. Beginning with the large parade which is traditionally held in front of the Lubavitch world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York and spreading throughout the world, this year's global celebrations attracted tens of thousands of children from all walks of life.

In accordance with the Rebbe's general instruction that any gathering of Jews should be connected with Judaism and Torah, the children recited the 12 Pesukim; 12 Torah passages selected by the Rebbe as containing the most fundamental ideas in Judaism, before the parades began. The floats displayed Jewish themes, and the parades were followed by festivities for the entire family.

The following are some of the great celebrations which took place this year around the world.

### UKRAINIAN CHILDREN PARADE IN HONOR OF LAG BAOMER

Amid hopeful signs of peace negotiations, cautious optimism swept through Ukraine's Jew-



Jewish children marching proudly in Ukraine

ish communities. Lag B'Omer was celebrated across the country with traditional bonfires and vibrant parades organized by city rabbis and Chabad emissaries. Preparations began right after Pesach, with JRNU (Chabad's Ukraine network) distributing truckloads of supplies to emissaries—branded water bottles, snacks, balloons, banners, and educational materials.

In Chernivtsi, two parades were held, one at the famed Ruzhiner synagogue. Another community visited Mezhibuzh, the resting place of the Baal Shem Tov. In Zhytomyr, families came together in a large regional parade led by students of the Ohr Avner school.

In Kharkiv, still under threat of shelling, celebrations took place at the historic Tomchei Temimim yeshiva site. A highlight occurred in Odessa, where hundreds of children, including 123 from local orphanages run by Chief Rabbi Avraham Wolff, marched in a moving parade. In Vinnytsia, children marched on donkeys specially brought for the occasion.

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA UNITES FOR LARGEST-EVER LAG B'OMER PARADE



Communities coming together for a Lag BaOmer celebration in Northern California

Over 500 people joined together in a joyous display of Jewish pride, unity, and celebration at the Northern California Lag B'Omer Parade. The event, co-sponsored by Chabad Houses across Northern California, drew families and children from far and wide, including the Cheder in Pleasanton and the Sacramento Jewish Academy.

From the moment the parade began, the streets pulsed with energy. One unforgettable moment was when all the Shluchim and Rabbanim stood together and sang "Hinei Ma Tov U'manayim"—a stirring scene of brotherhood and unity that brought smiles and deep joy to many faces.

A very large crowd marched proudly, waving flags and singing with joy, transforming the city's landscape into a scene of Jewish pride.

### JEWISH PRIDE IN THE STREETS OF BERLIN, GERMANY



The Lag BaOmer marching band in the streets of Berlin

The Lag BaOmer Parade in Berlin filled the iconic Kudamm with a beautiful wave of joy, unity, and pride.

Hundreds of people joined this magnificent parade, marching with happiness and strength, radiating the true spirit of the Jewish people – a powerful message of identity, resilience, and unwavering love.

"This is our answer to darkness – more light, more joy, more unity," organizers said. "This is the message of the Rebbe – joy and love. Together, we celebrated the power of community and the eternal values of tolerance and togetherness. This is the spirit of our people. This is the heartbeat of our future."

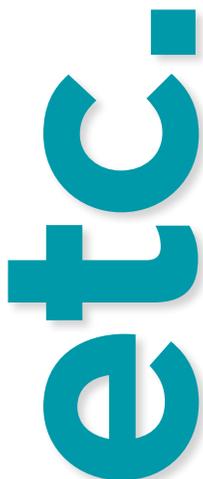
### JOYOUS, SPIRITUAL, RECORD LAG BAOMER IN ISRAEL



Parents and children gathered in Jerusalem for Lag BaOmer parade and events organized by Chabad of Rechavia.

From the hills of Meron to the streets of cities and villages throughout Israel, more participants than ever before enjoyed Lag BaOmer festivities in Israel this year, thanks to a new nationwide program launched by the Chabad-Lubavitch Youth Organization in Israel.

One of the parades took place in Jerusalem, where over a thousand children and their parents marched in a colorful Lag Ba'omer parade which marched along King George Street in Jerusalem. The street, which has seen intense protests over the past six years, took a pause for this special and emotional procession, led successfully by Chabad emissary to the Rehavia neighborhood, Rabbi Yisrael Goldberg.



### Shavuot Holiday - Save the Date!

Each year on the festival of Shavuot we relive the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people by G-d at Mount Sinai by hearing the Ten Commandments read in the synagogue from a Torah scroll. It is a special mitzva for every man, woman and child to be in the synagogue on Shavuot to hear the Torah reading. This year, the Torah reading that tells of the giving of the Torah will be read on Monday, June 2, in synagogues around the world.

Many Chabad-Lubavitch Centers sponsor "ice cream" parties for children and (in keeping with the ancient tradition of eating dairy products on Shavuot) for the young and the young at heart. To find out about the closest Shavuot Torah reading near you call your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center. For a complete directory of Chabad Centers visit: [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org)

### Additional Names for Shavuot

Shavuot is also the celebration of the wheat harvest and the ripening of the first fruits, "Yom Habikurim" or the "Day of the First Fruits" and "Chag HaKatzir," the "Harvest Festival." In the Talmud, Shavuot is also called "Atzeret," which means "The Stopping," a reference to the prohibition against work on this holiday. In the holiday prayer service, we refer to it as "Zeman Matan Torateinu," the "Time of the Giving of Our Torah."

## ETHICS CHAPTER SIX

The sages expounded in the language of the Mishnah, blessed is He who chose them and their learning.

Rabbi Meir would say: Whoever studies Torah for Torah's sake alone, merits many things; not only that, but [the creation of] the entire world is worthwhile for him alone. He is called friend, beloved, lover of G-d, lover of humanity, rejoicer of G-d, rejoicer of humanity.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## Free Rendition

By the Grace of G-d

In the Days of Preparation

5720—200th Anniversary of the Histalkus-Hilulo of the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory. Brooklyn, N.Y.

“To the House of Jacob”—the Women

“And to the Children of Israel”—the Men

G-d be with you

Greeting and Blessing:

The Days of Preparation for the Receiving of Our Torah call for special, deepfelt reflection on what the Torah is.

The holy Torah is not a collection of laws for special occasions. It embraces the totality of the Jew, from his first moment to his last, and in all the minute aspects of his day-to-day life.

This is the essential meaning of the Torah, Toras Chayyim, the “Law of Life.”

Furthermore. Our Sages of blessed memory explain that the Torah embraces the totality of Creation, citing the example of an architect who, before erecting a building, draws up blueprints and plans, covering every detail of the structure. So the Creator used the Torah as a “blueprint,” as it were, for the Creation, down to the minutest particle in the inanimate material world.

This, indeed, is one of the basic doctrines of General Chassidus as expounded by the Baal Shem Tov, based on his interpretation of Scripture: Forever, O G-d, Thy words standeth firm in the heavens (Psalms 119:89), and explained at length in the teachings of Chassidus Chabad by the Old Rebbe, of blessed memory, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, especially in his Shaar Ha-Yichud Veha-Emunah—

Everything—in the heavens above and down to the earth below, in all their particulars—exists only by virtue of the “word” of G-d (“Let there be a firmament,” and the other Divine

fiats), which created, creates and vitalizes all things continuously, every instant, without interruption.

From this follows the next basic doctrine—Hashgocho Protis—G-d’s direct knowledge of, and Providence for, all particular things—extends to each and all minute details of the Creation, from individual man, the supreme creature, to the lowest thing in the inanimate world.

From the above there follows yet another corollary, which is likewise basic to the teachings of Chassidus and which was especially emphasized by the Baal Shem Tov, although it is, of course, a law in the Shulchan Aruch, namely, that—

It is incumbent upon the Jew to serve G-d in and with all details and aspects of his life and surroundings, beginning with the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the 613 Divine precepts, down to the simplest acts and conditions of the daily life, and that

Everything in one’s surroundings is a lesson in love of G-d and fear of G-d, the primary wellsprings from which the Jew draws the proper inspiration to fulfill the Torah and Mitzvoth, the positive commandments (Mitzvoth-Asseh) and prohibitions (Mitzvoth-Lo Taaseh), permeated with true vitality and fulfilled with perfection.

The concentrated reflection on all that has been mentioned above, reflection with intensity, animation and illumination, especially in these auspicious days, on the eve of Mattan Torah, which is also the anniversary of the Histalkus-Hilulo of the Baal Shem Tov, and transforming it into the detailed aspects of the daily life, both in one’s personal life as well as in one’s surroundings, and in all aspects of the world, according to the dictum—

‘Let thy fountains spread forth outside’, whereby the fountains of Chassidus, that is, the Inner Light of the Torah, will overflow and irradiate even the “outside”—the external and most distant details and aspects of the entire Creation—

Will speedily bring the true and complete Geuloh, the Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, when the whole Creation will recognize and experience the meaning of ‘I am the L-rd thy G-d’.

With prayerful wishes to receive the Torah with joy and Pnimius (inwardness), and a Happy Yom Tov

It will be as if the doer of evil were totally annihilated.

And as man approaches this lofty level, he will also become worthy of a divine providence not limited by the laws of nature.

What is now manifestly miraculous will ultimately become part of the nature of things.

(Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Real Messiah*)

## 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 Sunday night through Tuesday night is the holiday of Shavuot, celebrating when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai.*

*Three people in Jewish history are particularly associated with Shavuot: Moshe, King David and the Baal Shem Tov. And these three great leaders were also intimately connected with Moshiach and the Redemption.*

*As the one through whom the Torah was given to the Jewish people, Moshe is intimately connected with Shavuot. The Torah, in some places, is even referred to as “The Torah of Moshe”—Torat Moshe. Moshiach will be so like Moshe in his leadership qualities, humility and Torah scholarship that our Sages even stated, “Moshe is the first redeemer and the last redeemer.”*

*Shavuot is the birthday and anniversary of the passing of King David. One of the functions of Moshiach is that he will restore the Davidic dynasty; for Moshiach will be a descendant of King David, a human king.*

*Finally, we come to the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov, too, passed away on Shavuot, on the second day of the holiday. In a famous letter to his brother-in-law, the Baal Shem Tov described a spiritual “journey” when he visited the chamber of Moshiach. He asked Moshiach, “Master, when will you come?”*

*Moshiach replied, “When your wellsprings—your teachings—will spread forth to the outside.”*

*The Baal Shem Tov’s teachings—Chasidut—were recorded and expounded upon by his various disciples. They are a foretaste of the new and deeper revelations of Torah that we are promised will be revealed and taught by Moshiach, himself.*

*This year on Shavuot, when all Jews, young and old, gather in our synagogues to re-experience the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, let us also reconnect with the essence of the holiday and cry out for the ultimate revelation of the Torah and G-d through Moshiach.*

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 (obn), wife of the Rebbe.



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## MOSHIACH MATTERS

Although man will still have free will in the Messianic Age, he will have every inducement to do good and follow G-d's teachings.

