



The great scholar, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, was honored and loved by all. He was often invited to the Caesar's palace, for the ruler and his staff delighted in listening to this great sage's wisdom.

Despite his wisdom and knowledge, Rabbi Yehoshua was often the object of ridicule by those who didn't know him; he was hunchbacked and crippled. But, even for those who were disgusted by his appearance, once he began to speak, they were amazed with his sharp mind and great understanding.

The Roman Caesar had a beautiful young daughter who was quite conceited and spoiled. She ridiculed and abused her servants, and was accustomed to treating important guests to her father's palace in the same manner.

One day, she entered the hall where her father, some dignitaries and Rabbi Yehoshua were debating. She watched in amazement at the honor accorded Rabbi Yehoshua. Arrogantly, she called out, "Such glorious wisdom in such a disgusting vessel."

Rabbi Yehoshua, who was not surprised by her words, answered in a joking manner, "Tell me, please. In what kind of container does your father keep his wine? Not in earthen vessels?"

The Caesar's daughter was undoubtedly beautiful, but she wasn't very bright. She didn't understand what Rabbi Yehoshua was hinting, and answered, "What else should the wine be kept in?"

Said Rabbi Yehoshua, "Everyone keeps their wine in clay. If you are so important, shouldn't your wine be kept in silver and gold?" Rabbi Yehoshua was certain the foolish girl would understand he was joking.

But the girl, in all her cockiness, assumed she understood the rabbi's point and decided to broach the subject with her father. She convinced the Caesar that their wine shouldn't be kept in ordinary vessels, and against his better judgement he ordered the servants to transfer the wine to gold and silver urns.

At first, no one noticed a change in the wine. But after a while, the wine spoiled. The servants, who were in charge of the wine, approached the Caesar. "Our master, all the wine has become vinegar! The whole time that it was stored in clay, there was never such a problem!"

The Caesar was annoyed that his good wine was ruined, but he was further distressed that he had listened to his daughter. He called her in and asked where she had gotten this idea.

"Who?" she answered, "Rabbi Yehoshua. You all think he's so smart. He said we shouldn't store the wine in such simple containers."

The Caesar contemplated. Didn't the wise Rabbi Yehoshua know what would happen to the wine in such containers? Maybe he was trying to hurt the Caesar? But didn't he know he'd be punished?

The Caesar called for Rabbi Yehoshua and sternly asked, "Why did you advise my daughter to put the wine in gold and silver vessels?"

"Just as she spoke to me, I spoke to her," Rabbi Yehoshua explained. "She told me it was a pity that such glorious wisdom was in such an ugly vessel. I answered her, that good wine, even that belonging to the Caesar, is kept in simple vessels. How was I to know that she wouldn't understand the simple meaning of my words?"

The Caesar understood that he had been foolish to listen to his daughter, but

he didn't want to admit that his daughter had been wrong. He thought, then said, "Surely there are wise people who are also attractive."

Answered Rabbi Yehoshua, "If they weren't attractive, they would be even wiser. They would use all their energy and time for studying and increasing their wisdom. Some who are attractive become conceited with their beauty, and they never become wise."

The Caesar wasn't stupid. He understood what Rabbi Yehoshua was hinting about his daughter. He decided it was better not to discuss the matter any more, and bid Rabbi Yehoshua good-bye.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

You shall take a count (lit. "Lift the heads") of the sons of Gershon (Num. 4:22)

The "head" symbolizes the brain and our higher faculties, which we use to learn and understand G-d's wisdom. The Torah tells us to "lift our heads" - to constantly strive to learn more and more, for by doing so we will simultaneously "lift up" the rest of the "body," those commandments we perform with our other limbs. *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

Because the service of the Sanctuary belonged to them; they were to bear it upon their shoulders (Num. 7:9)

Worshipping G-d properly is hard work, requiring much effort and "elbow grease." The perfection of G-dly service does not just happen by itself. "If one says, 'I have not toiled, yet I have succeeded' - do not believe him." *(Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)*

If any man or woman commits a sin against a fellow man, thereby committing an offense against G-d (Num. 5:6)

For most sins which the Torah demands an offering, a small, inexpensive one is sufficient for atonement. The exception to this rule is the guilt offering, which was brought for the sin of stealing. This offering had to be worth at least two selaim. Why? Other sins are committed only against G-d; stealing is a double offense, committed against man and G-d alike. The atonement offering, therefore, had to be more costly. *(M'lo Haomer)*

And every man's holy things shall be his. Whatever he gives the priest shall belong to him (Num. 5:10)

Someone once asked the fabulously wealthy Rothschild from Frankfurt exactly how much he was worth. Rothschild responded by quoting the verse, "And every man's holy things shall be his." "The only riches a person can count as truly belonging to him," he said, "are those he has used for good and holy purposes, such as giving charity and supporting Torah institutions. No one can take these away. The same cannot be said, however, for the rest of one's fortune..." *(Fun Unser Alten Otzar)*



8:06 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
10 Sivan / June 7
Torah Portion Nasso
Ethics Ch 1
Shabbat ends 9:15 PM

L'Chaim

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

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, 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, Nasso, we find the command to count the Levites - the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari. The actual count of these people was taken only once, during the second year of their 40-year wanderings. What are we to learn from the Torah's inclusion of this commandment?

Why did the Jewish people have to wander for 40 years in the wilderness? When the spies gave a negative report about the land of Israel, the Jewish people were reluctant to enter the land G-d had promised them. G-d, therefore, punished the Jews with 40 years of wandering and decreed that those who had been unwilling to enter Israel would not be allowed to do so. But why did G-d choose a wilderness for their wandering, as opposed to another location?

A wilderness is uninhabited by man, and indeed, the desert the Jewish People wandered through is described as "a great and terrible wilderness: snakes, poisonous serpents and scorpions, and thirst without water to quench." The Children of Israel, through their travels, were charged with transforming that wilderness and purifying the negative forces that still had their hold on the Jewish People. The cloud that preceded them as they traveled destroyed the snakes, serpents and beasts, which threatened their existence. By overcoming the obstacles in the desert the Jews brought light and G-dliness into the world. The uninhabited wilderness became the dwelling place, for 40 years, of the millions of Jews who had just left Egypt, and the "unsown land" was blessed with water from Miriam's well, causing all kinds of plants and trees to flourish.

The commandment to count the Levites charged with transporting the Sanctuary underscored and gave spiritual strength to this higher purpose - the transformation of a wilderness into an inhabited land. This, too, is the responsibility of every Jew, in every era, no matter where he may live; to transform and elevate his surrounding by infusing them with holiness. If at times it appears that insurmountable forces surround us, we are to remember the mission with which we have been charged and the special G-dly powers we are given to accomplish it. Just as the Children of Israel traveled from place to place by Divine command, so too is every Jew, by Divine Providence, faced with precisely those obstacles and challenges he is charged with overcoming. The Torah assures us that through our actions, we can succeed in turning any wilderness into a flourishing dwelling place for G-d.

We also learn from the fact that the Levites were not counted or required to carry the Sanctuary until the age of 30, that it is never too late try to improve oneself. Even if our behavior has been less than admirable and undisciplined - in the category of "wilderness" - we must never become dejected and despair of achieving our spiritual goals. Once the decision to improve is made, G-d gives us the strength to serve Him, purify ourselves, and uncover the G-dliness concealed within.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

When Are You Old?

By Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman

When are you old? I remember being a kid in Shul and seeing some of the "old people" in the Shul with white hair and thinking, wow, those people are old. Then, as I grew up a bit, and looked at those same people from the vantage point of a 30-something-year-old, and thinking wow, those people are really old. Realizing, that when I thought they were old as a child, they may have looked old to me, but they were clearly not that old. Which exacerbates my question:

When are you old?

So when do you get old? When your hair starts to turn white? Uh oh, in that case I am in trouble. That started a few years ago and has only picked up speed. My children will often point out more whites on my head or beard, or comment as I krechtz (groan), when I will get up after sitting in the same position for a while, that, oh man, you are really old.

Now, I know that I am not old. Based on average life expectancy, I am barely middle aged. So what does it mean to be old? Are you old when you slow down in certain areas? Are you old when you can no longer run those 4 miles in under 10 minutes a mile? Are you older when your body starts getting older? Or is there more to the the term "old" than the bodily experience?

If I have good genes, and my hair stays jet black until I am 70, and I am in good physical health and I can run marathons in my 80's, does that mean I am forever young?

My step mother often says a good line. What is the opposite of old? And everyone answers, young! Then she carefully corrects them and says, nope. The opposite of old is new.

That my friends is the answer!

You are old when you stop becoming new. When you stop being creative, stop being open to new ideas and things. When you will no longer exit your comfort zone to grow as a person, thinker, doer etc. When you are no longer willing to be new at something, introduce something new into your life, then you become old.

There are some very biologically old people who I know who are still reinventing themselves and in this way, they are still young and energetic, full of life and vigor.

On the flip side, there are many younger people who have stopped growing. They are completely at peace with where they are at. Financially, socially, spiritually and behaviorally. They do seem to be at ease. Free of worry and angst. They don't fret, as they are in a state of tranquility, but still, they are old. They may be young in their years, and young in their body, but they are old in their being, as they refuse to be new.

So, as I continue deeper into my 40's and more whites start appearing, I still sweat the small stuff, I still spend too much time worrying about things that I know at this point I have no power to control. I am frustrated that at this point in my life I am still not mature enough to have surpassed many of these things. However, there is one thing I do know for sure, I am not old. I am still trying new things. I am not sitting and calmly smoking a pipe on my rocking chair. There are too many more mountains to conquer, to many new things I need to do or at least try.

So, no matter my age, I am definitely still not old.

L'chayim to never being old.

SLICE OF LIFE

A Conversation with Rabbi Mordechai and Rivka Glazman, Chabad Lubavitch of Latvia
By: Chaya Chazan



Riga's Reawakening

I'm a born and bred Crown Heightser, accustomed to my American creature comforts. So even after I married my Israeli husband, I clearly asserted I couldn't possibly imagine myself moving on shlichus to anywhere exotic. Even France was too foreign for me.

When we were offered a position in Florida, I was thrilled. My husband flew there to check it out, and I mentally began preparing for a life in the warmth and sun. Meanwhile, Rabbi Kotlarsky AH, the vice president of Merkos, approached my husband with a different and intriguing offer - shlichus in Riga, Latvia. By that point, I'd matured enough to understand that I could manage to survive outside of the U.S., but my husband still turned it down, explaining that we'd almost finalized a different shlichus.

We wrote to the Rebbe to ask for a bracha for the Florida shlichus, but received no answer. Rabbi Kotlarsky approached my husband again. "This is a very special shlichus," he explained. "Mr. Sammy Rohr recently visited Riga on a business trip and was surprised not to find a Chabad presence there. He promised the Rebbe full support to any shliach who moves there. The Rebbe asked me to find a couple for this shlichus. Today, the Rebbe asked me again

if I'd found anyone yet!"

"Let me ask my wife," my husband replied. He hurried home and shared what Rabbi Kotlarsky had told him. "Let's write in now!" I urged him, excitedly. "Quickly! It's very rare for the Rebbe to be personally involved in finding shluchim for a specific place, so let's snatch this up immediately!"

We sent a letter stating our willingness to move to Riga, with the Rebbe's consent and brachos. A month after we received our answer from the Rebbe, my husband prepared for an initial visit for Purim. On Chof Vav Adar I, 1992, he stood in line and received a dollar from the Rebbe. He told the Rebbe he was leaving for Riga shortly, and received the Rebbe's bracha for the shlichus. It was the last time the Rebbe ever gave out dollars or spoke publicly.

My husband's trip was very successful. The Purim event was well-attended, and everyone assured him they'd be happy to see Chabad in Riga.

I took my toddler to the park just after we'd moved, so we could get away from the endless boxes for a while. I chatted with him cheerfully in Yiddish as I pushed him on the swings and helped him down the slide. I saw a woman on a nearby bench react quite strongly when she heard my Yiddish, so I smiled and introduced myself. I didn't speak Russian then, so communication was difficult, but with lots of hand gestures and emphatically repeated words, I invited her for Shabbos and gave her our address.

"We have our first Shabbos guests!" I sang out to my husband as my baby and I arrived back home. "I think. I hope she understood!"

She did understand, and showed up with her son and daughter. When she expressed a wish for her children to learn about Yiddishkeit and meet other Jewish friends, we immediately jumped on it. The very next day, we opened a Sunday school and an afternoon yeshiva. Her kids brought their friends, and the group grew, week by week!

At our first major event – a Shavuos shiur by a visiting lecturer, I met Sofija*, a young woman

who spoke English.

"What are your plans for the summer?" I asked her, politely making conversation. "Oh, I don't have anything planned yet," she said.

"What would you think about working in a camp?" I asked, without really thinking.

"That sounds great!" Sofija was immediately enthusiastic. "I have friends who can be staff, my dad has connections to get sports equipment, and my mother is a realtor, so she can help find a place to host it!"

It was just a month after we'd moved, and summer was just a few weeks away, so I didn't think it was practical. But Sofija followed through on all her promises, and Camp Gan Yisroel of Riga was born!

Our school, now serving students in grades pre-K through 12th, is housed in a historical building that was the first Jewish school in the Russian Empire. Originally opened by maskilim in 1838, who were obviously unhappy with the cheder model, the school was a prototype for Jewish educational reform, as touted by the maskilim. It evolved as the regimes changed hands from the Nazis to the Communist Party, but we were finally able to reclaim the school for its true purpose.

On opening day, an elderly member of the community walked excitedly through the halls, recalling happy memories from his childhood, as well as the more turbulent recollections of his adulthood.

"This is where I learned Gemara!" he clapped, pointing to a small room in the corner. "Here is where Jews came to find out what happened to their relatives..." he continued, in a subdued tone. "And over there is where they rounded up the Jews and shot us."

The full gamut of human experience crossed his face as he wandered the ancient building. Finally, he turned to us with a shining smile. "I can't believe these walls will once again ring with the pure sound of Jewish children learning Torah," he said. "After all they've seen, finally, they can feel at home again."

*Names changed to protect privacy / Reprinted from www.dollardaily.org

Ethics Chapter One

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly. They [the Men of the Great Assembly] would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgement. Establish many pupils. And make a safety fence around the Torah.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

PEACE IN THE HOME

Translated and adapted from letters of the Rebbe

The crucial importance of Shalom Bayis [peace and harmony in the relationship between husband and wife] and the fateful consequences of the lack of Shalom Bayis is to be understood from the following statements of our Sages, of blessed memory: G-d decrees that His (Ineffable) Name be effaced by placing it in water [in the instance of a Sotah] so that peace can be brought about between husband and wife.

When the opposite occurs [i.e., in the case of a divorce, G-d forbid] - the Mizbei'ach; the Altar in the Holy Temple, sheds tears, which is to say, that this act of divorce has significant impact even on that special place [i.e., the Altar] where atonement is granted and prayers are recited for the peace of the entire Jewish people. Divorce is thus not merely a personal matter between two individuals [it has a cosmic effect as well].

Notwithstanding the above, our Sages of blessed memory have stated, "No two people think alike." In other words, despite the above natural differences of opinions between individuals, it is still possible and indeed necessary that there be true peace between each and every Jew.

This is surely so with regard to peace between husband and wife, whose conduct, when in accordance with Torah and mitzvos (commandments), is so meritorious that it is described by our Sages of blessed memory as bringing about that the "Divine Presence resides in their midst."

Likutei Sichos, Vol. XXIV, p. 467

In reply to your notifying me about your upcoming birthday: I hereby bless you that your mazel increase and that you may be able to make an ample living in an easy manner, providing sustenance for your wife and all your children (they should live) in a manner of tranquility - tranquility of body and tranquility of soul.

May G-d also strengthen your imprisoned

divine soul, that it be able to bring about in actuality Shalom Bayis in your household; it continuously astonishes me how you fail to see something that is obvious to all, namely, that your conduct - with regard to failing to work on Shalom Bayis - is the product of the evil inclination, which continues to gain strength regarding this matter.

I have already told you numerous times - and I will state it once again - that it is imperative that you make a supreme effort to achieve Shalom Bayis between you and your wife, particularly so as my father-in-law, the (previous) Rebbe, voiced his agreement concerning your shidduch (match).

Also known are the sayings of our Sages that women are of a more emotional nature ("Nashim da'atan kalah") and "their tears flow more easily" [i.e., they have a more sensitive nature], for which reason you should be the one who gives in, particularly regarding material matters.

Moreover, if at all times during our history our Sages have spoken glowingly about the magnitude of Shalom Bayis, then it is surely so during the time of the eve of the holy Shabbos - and the entire Jewish nation is now in a situation of "the eve of Shabbos after mid-day," as we draw ever closer to the end of our exile and the arrival of Moshiach.

It is self-understood that nowadays the difficulties and concealments are particularly severe regarding Shalom Bayis, for - as known - "Peace is magnificent" and the entire Torah is one whose "ways are the ways of pleasantness and all its pathways are peace."

These difficulties are particularly acute now, in the final exile, as exile itself is a result of the lack of shalom, as our Sages state in Yoma 9b.

Thus, the closer we come to the conclusion of exile, the greater is the opposition from the "opposing forces" which seek to prevent bringing about shalom in the world as a whole, and particularly between husband and wife. For husband and wife below, in this world, are the counterpart to the supernal aspect of "husband" and "wife."

Nevertheless, these difficulties notwithstanding, we have been assured that we were granted the strength to overcome these difficulties ("L'fum gamla shichneh"). Surely, then, we are granted the power and the ability to withstand this test.

Igros Kodesh, Vol. IV, p. 433

From Eternal Joy translated by Rabbi Sholom Ber Wineberg, published by Sichos in English

MOSHIACH MATTERS

All the nations on the face of the earth must know: Our bodies alone have been handed over into exile to be ruled by the nations of the world, but not our souls... we must

openly declare for all to hear, that with regard to everything involving our religion - the Torah of the people of Israel, with its commandments and customs - no one is going to impose his views on us, and no force has the right to subjugate us.

(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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 past Shabbat we read the sixth and final chapter of Pirkei Avot. So this Shabbat afternoon, we begin the cycle one again with the first chapter of Pirkei Avot.

The second Mishna in Pirkei Avot says: Shimon the Righteous...used to say: "The world stands on three things - on the study of Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness."

In Hebrew, the word for "world" - olam - is similar to the word for "concealment" - helem - for G-dliness and spirituality are "concealed" in this world. Only by removing the concealment can we reveal the G-dly light, which is hidden therein.

Every person has to say to himself and behave in a manner befitting the phrase, "The world was created for me." Using the above connection between world and concealment, one can also say, "The concealment of G-dliness was also created for me." This leads a person to work his utmost to try and reverse the concealment of G-dliness.

How can this be done? Through the study of Torah, the service of G-d (prayer), and deeds of kindness.

A person is called a microcosm. Through working in these three above-mentioned areas, one's microcosm also stands and exists.

In Psalms, King David cried out, "Redeem my soul in peace." On this verse the Talmud comments, "G-d said, 'Anyone who involves himself in the study of Torah, deeds of kindness and prays with the community, I count it as if he redeemed me and my children from amongst the nations of the world.'"

Through engaging ourselves in these three areas of G-dly service every individual will merit his own personal redemption. And this will certainly affect the actions and standing of the world at large, for the entire world functions according to G-d's will.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

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It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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