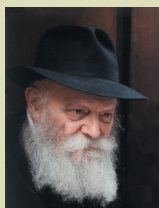


# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

*from the teachings of the Rebbe  
on the Torah portion*

This week we read two Torah portions, Behar and Bechukotai. Bechukotai contains the curses and punishments that are inflicted on the Jewish people if they do not obey G-d. Even a casual reading of these misfortunes in the Torah makes our hair stand on end. Chasidic philosophy, however, teaches that by delving more deeply into the meaning of these curses we can understand that they are actually blessings.

Furthermore, these "curses" are not only blessings, but blessings of such a high order that they can only manifest themselves in their seemingly opposite form!

A perfect illustration of this concept is found in the Talmud. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai once sent his son to two Sages for a blessing. When his son returned he complained that the Sages had cursed him. "What did they say?" asked Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. "You shall sow, but not reap," answered the son. The father patiently explained that the rabbis had meant that he should grow to be the father of many children who would be healthy and not die during their father's lifetime. Likewise, every example the son gave of the rabbis' "curses" similarly contained great blessings.

But why did the rabbis go through the trouble of disguising their good intentions in such a convoluted manner? Chasidut explains that ultimate good is sometimes clothed in an outer garment of its exact opposite, precisely because it is too lofty to come into this world in any other form.

If, then, the rabbis' blessings were so lofty that they had to be "disguised" as curses, how did Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai recognize their true content?

Tanya, the basic book of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, explains that everything we perceive as evil in this world is, in reality, so good that we cannot absorb it in its true form (much in the way that an intense light hurts the eyes if one looks directly at its source). This good therefore takes the form of human suffering, just as we avert our eyes from a brightness which is too intense.

This, however, is only true at the present time. When Moshiach comes, the concealed good hidden within our afflictions will be revealed for what it is - utter and absolute blessing.

A Jew must, therefore, always accept whatever is decreed from Above, for when Moshiach comes we will see that the suffering of the exile was in truth a good of such magnitude that it could only be bestowed in such a way.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai possessed a soul capable of discerning this truth even before the coming of Moshiach. Likewise, Chasidut affords us a "taste" of the Messianic Era, enabling us to understand these inner truths which will soon become apparent, speedily in our days.

*Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

## Individual Mission, Collective Destiny

Contradictions and unexpected inconsistencies have become a normal part of modern life. We now have access to vast amounts of information instantly through our phones and devices—something that would have seemed impossible not long ago.

Yet, despite all this speed and convenience, we still encounter frustrating delays. When ordering the newest, fastest piece of technology, we often hear, "please wait while I pull up your information," followed by a long and seemingly endless pause. We can communicate with people anywhere in the world at any time, yet when something truly important arises, the message goes unseen or a phone battery suddenly dies.

Judaism recognizes that life can feel this way and teaches that such contradictions are not only inevitable but acceptable.

On one hand, every Jew is a unique individual with a specific purpose and spiritual mission that only they can fulfill. No one else can take their place or complete their task. On the other hand, each person is also an essential part of a greater whole—the Jewish people. Without any one individual, the collective is lacking.

When it comes to understanding personal purpose, Jewish thought explains that only a truly righteous person clearly recognizes their mission at every moment. Such a person actively seeks out and fulfills their role with intention and awareness. Most people, however, do not experience life so clearly. Instead, as the verse teaches, "G-d directs the steps of man." We often find ourselves in situations without

understanding why, only to later realize that something we learned or experienced—seemingly by chance—becomes meaningful and useful in making a positive impact.

This balance between individuality and unity is also reflected in the performance of mitzvot. When a person fulfills a mitzva, it is entirely their own action. No one else can perform it on their behalf. At the same time, in that very moment, they are spiritually connected to every other Jew performing that same mitzva, and even to generations who have done so throughout history.

For example, when a woman lights Shabbat candles, she is not acting alone. She is joining women and girls across the world in that same act, while also connecting to countless generations of Jewish women who have done so since the time of our matriarch Sarah. Similarly, when a man puts on tefillin, he becomes linked to men and boys everywhere, as well as to those throughout history who have performed this mitzva.

This connection—linking individuals across time and place—gives each person renewed strength and purpose. It reinforces the idea that while one's actions are personal, they also contribute to something far greater.

As we continue striving to fulfill our individual missions, whether consciously or not, we move closer to a time when this balance will be fully revealed. In the era of Redemption, all Jews will return together to the Land of Israel as one unified people—diverse in identity yet completely united, as a single, harmonious whole.

# SLICE OF LIFE

## The Mohel Who Lives in the Skies



At a Bris for Twins in South Korea

Rabbi Shimshon Eisenberger is fifty-eight years old and lives in Jerusalem. A Sanz Chassid, he is both a mohel and a Torah scribe. For more than thirty years, he has traveled across the globe performing circumcisions, from Bangkok and Japan to Cyprus and Alaska. What drives him is not adventure, but a deep sense of mission and love for the Jewish people.

“It began almost as a joke,” he recalls. “I asked a friend who was a mohel why he wouldn’t teach me. He took me seriously. That same morning, he invited me to a circumcision, wrapped me in a tallit, and let me take part in a small way.” From the first moment, Eisenberger felt that this mitzvah carried something more. “I sensed that this was a mission, a way of connecting Jews to something that has accompanied us for thousands of years.”

Not long afterward, he received an unexpected phone call from Rabbi Yaron Amit of the Brit Yosef Yitzchak organization. “He told me they needed a mohel in Bangkok,” Eisenberger says. “I

had never traveled abroad before. The first thing I asked was what the weather was like.” That journey left a lasting impression. He stayed for Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. “The joy, the atmosphere, the sense of Jewish life so far from home, it is etched in my memory forever.”

From that point on, the travel never stopped. Sometimes he is called for the children of Chabad emissaries, other times for families in distant Jewish communities. “Over the years, I’ve spent many Shabbatot and holidays abroad,” he says. “Bangkok, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, Korea. Every time, I feel the weight of the privilege that has been placed in my hands.”

At one stage, when circumcisions in the Far East became especially frequent, a Chabad emissary suggested that he relocate temporarily to Hong Kong. “It made sense,” Eisenberger explains. “From there, I could fly to a different destination each week. When I wasn’t traveling, I wrote Torah scrolls.” Living in Hong Kong reduced both travel time and costs, allowing him to respond more quickly when a call came in.

Wherever he goes, he is struck by the devotion of the emissaries and their families. “I always bring dairy products and sweets,” he says with a smile. “Those things are precious to them.” Once, an emissary in Japan asked him to bring a small bag of candy for his children. Eisenberger arrived with a large package. “They were stunned. The joy on their faces was unforgettable.”

Every circumcision is meaningful, but some remain especially vivid. One such case began with an urgent call from Rabbi Nechemia Wilhelm in Bangkok. “He told me the emissaries in Singapore needed a mohel immediately.” The story behind it was remarkable. The mohel who had been scheduled was stuck at the border. Days before the circumcision, the baby’s father woke up in the middle of the night feeling as though he was choking. When his breathing returned to normal, he felt compelled to check on the mohel’s status. That was how they discovered the problem.

“I flew out at the last possible moment,” Eisenberger says. “When I landed, they were waiting for me at the airport like I had come to save them.”

He is also deeply impressed by the children of the emissaries. “In Cambodia, for example, I met the Butman children,” he recalls. “Well-mannered, knowledgeable, serious about their learning. Even though they study through an online school for emissaries’ children, their level often surpasses that of students in regular yeshivot. It’s remarkable.”

What moves him most is the determination Jews show when it comes to circumcision. “Many families who are not connected daily to Torah and mitzvot make enormous sacrifices,” he says. “Flights, hotels, expenses, all to ensure their son has a proper circumcision. In some places, bringing a mohel is a real act of self-sacrifice.”

During the COVID period, Eisenberger traveled to Hong Kong for a circumcision and was required to quarantine for two weeks. “After the circumcision, a man from the community approached me,” he recalls. “He said his wife was expecting a son in a few months and asked if I would stay in the community until then. He told me he would empty his entire bank account if necessary.”

Because of the growing need, some emissaries have become mohelim themselves. Eisenberger sees this as part of the future. “One of them is Rabbi Elchanan Cohen of Almaty, Kazakhstan,” he says. “I had the privilege of accompanying him during the first circumcision he performed. To this day, when I see him at a circumcision, I feel the special merit of having helped train the next generation.”

For Rabbi Shimshon Eisenberger, the miles, the flights, and the time away from home are secondary. “Every circumcision is a reminder,” he says, “that no matter how far a Jew may be, the covenant is always close.”

*Adapted from Sichat Shavua Magazine*

## New Chabad Couple to Manage China’s Only Jewish School



Rabbi Shmulik and Menoucha Rachel Amar recently arrived in Foshan, China, to join Rabbi Gadi and Avigail Louzoun in expanding Chabad’s presence in China’s Guangdong province.

Foshan is a bustling commercial hub with a significant international business sector, attracting a diverse Jewish population from Israel, Europe, the United States, South America and countries throughout Asia.

This year has brought exciting growth. A newly established CTeen program for boys and girls and a full-time rabbinical training program, whose students immerse themselves in Jewish community life.

## ETHICS CHAPTER FIVE

There are four types of temperaments. One who is easily angered and easily appeased—his virtue cancels his flaw. One whom it is difficult to anger and difficult to appease—his flaw cancels his virtue. One whom it is difficult to anger and is easily appeased, is a chassid. One who is easily angered and is difficult to appease, is wicked.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter. I will remember you in prayer, as requested, in connection with the matters about which you write, and may G-d grant that they should be resolved in a way that is truly good for you. For the Jew this is possible only when things are in harmony with his Divine soul, in which case there is complete harmony, inasmuch as the "animal" soul will submit to the Divine soul in accordance with the ultimate design of the Creator. However, it is impossible that the Divine soul should acquiesce to the animal soul since this is counter to the design of the Creator, Who commanded the human being to be master of his nature and not subservient to it.

I trust that you had an enjoyable and inspiring Purim and may the joy and inspiration of Purim carry over into all your activities every day of the year. May it do so in the spirit of Purim in the words of the Megillah, "For the Jews there was Light, Joy, Gladness and Honor" both in the plain sense of these words as well as our Sages interpreted them "Light- this is Torah..... Honor- this is Tefillin. "Thereby they emphasize to us once again that the material and spiritual go hand in hand together for the Jew.

With blessing,

P.S. Now for your question on the problem of the middah [character trait] of humility and the like, wherein every Jew is required to make an effort to cultivate that trait and attain the highest possible degree of humility. The question is, How is it possible for a person to attain true humility if he is consciously striving for it? For if he is aware of having accomplished it, this would in itself be in conflict with true humility.

No doubt you know of the well known question relating to the final paragraph of the Gemoro Sotah wherein we find the statement by Rav Yosef: "Don't say 'humility is gone,' for I am here!" A similar difficulty, though not quite identical, appears in the words of the Torah that Moshe was "more humble than any man on the face of the earth." Is it possible that Moshe Rbbeinu, who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and who received the Torah on Mount Sinai and who built the Mishkon, was the leader of all the Jewish people, etc., yet considered himself more humble than any man on the face of the earth?

The explanation is found at length in the teachings of the Alter Rebbe. The main point may briefly and simply be summarized as follows: Moshe Rabbenu indeed felt very humble, because he was certain that anyone else with powers and gifts which G-d had bestowed upon him, including such a great soul and such fine upbringing as he had, etc., would have accomplished a great deal more than he. Indeed, Moshe Rabbenu was able to cite many arguments in support of this feeling of his.

The same explanation will provide a solution to your question. To be humble does not mean to deny one's qualities and accomplishments. For humility must obviously go together with honesty, and in fact, the more honest a person is, the greater is the degree of humility expected of him. True humility means that the person should realize that whatever he has accomplished and whatever he possesses, are not due exclusively to his own efforts and powers; he only contributed a small share of it, and any other person on the face of the earth could accomplish a great deal more if the same abilities and opportunities were given to him.

I trust that you are active in spreading Yiddishkeit [Judaism] in your environment. No doubt you took advantage of the opportunity to disseminate the idea of Shalach monos and gifts to the poor which we recently observed. Although these are easy mitzvos to fulfill, they are unfortunately very neglected. I trust that you will also take full advantage of the coming festival of Pesach.

## 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

Continuing the practice of studying Ethics of the Fathers on Shabbat afternoons, this week we focus on Chapter Five:

*"There were ten generations from Adam to Noah," we learn in the second Mishna, "to indicate how great is His patience; for all those generations repeatedly angered Him, until He brought upon them the waters of the Flood. There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to indicate how great is His patience, for all those generations repeatedly angered Him, until Abraham our father came and received the reward of them all."*

*The first ten generations were different from the second ten in how they "repeatedly angered Him." There are two types of evil in the world: evil so completely bad that the only way to overcome it is through total destruction, and evil that can be transformed into good, because it contains a spark of goodness.*

*We see this reflected in the wars that the Jewish people waged against their enemies in ancient times. They were permitted to derive benefit from some spoils of war, but other items had to be destroyed outright. In one instance it was a positive mitzva to transform into something holy an object that had belonged to the realm of unholiness, yet in the other it was a positive mitzva to obliterate it.*

*The evil perpetrated by the first ten generations was absolute. For this reason, G-d erased them from the earth with the Flood.*

*The evil of the next ten generations, however, was of the kind that can be elevated into good. Abraham was able to correct the failings of the previous ten generations, and thus merited the reward of all of them.*

*Goodness lasts forever, but evil has no true existence. Every good deed we do is added to the previous ones, accumulating from generation to generation. We therefore have the greatest merit of any generation since the world was created, and will thus merit to see this mighty storehouse of good speedily revealed with the coming of 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 (obm), wife of the Rebbe.

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

The Midrash states that Moses asked G-d, "In what merit do the Jews deserve to be redeemed from Egypt? G-d replied, "In the merit of the Torah that they are destined to receive." How could the merit of the future acceptance of the Torah help them in their present situation? Rather, they longed each

day for their redemption so that they could receive the Torah - and the merit of this yearning brought about their Redemption. The same is true now: The merit of our yearning, longing, and praying for the final Redemption and for the revelation of the Torah of Moshiach is in itself sufficient merit to bring about our final Redemption.

*(The Rebbe, as quoted in Yalkut Moshiach UGeula by Rabbi Dovid Dubov)*



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# IT HAPPENED ONCE



Little Shloimeleh was the youngest of the family's nine children. He had a quick smile and intelligent eyes. Shloimeleh's favorite time was Friday afternoon, when his mother lit the Shabbat candles. He loved to watch them burn in their polished candlesticks.

But one Shabbat eve, when his mother had closed her eyes to recite the blessing, one of the candles fell on Shloimeleh's arm, badly burning him.

Time passed, and the burn eventually healed. But little Shloimeleh was left with an ugly scar on his forearm as a reminder of the incident.

Then WWII broke out, and Poland was invaded by the Germans. As part of the "final solution," all the Jews in Shloimeleh's town were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Reb Avraham, Shloimeleh's father, was forcibly separated from the rest of his family. It was the last time he would see his wife and children. Reb Avraham was later interred in a labor camp. Miraculously he survived the Holocaust, and eventually found himself in Russia.

Reb Avraham was now alone in the world. Physically exhausted and consumed with grief, he tried to lessen his pain by learning, praying, and teaching Torah and mitzvot (commandments) to Jewish children, many of whom had never been exposed to Judaism. Aside from organizing a secret yeshiva, he also served as a mohel (ritual circumciser). But of all his religious achievements, the tiny synagogue he established was closest to his heart.

Needless to say, Reb Avraham's activities were completely illegal; time and again he was cautioned by the Communist authorities. But Reb Avraham felt he had nothing to lose. After going through everything he had, what else could they do to him? He continued to spread Torah and mitzvot, and spent even more time in his little shul.

The most persistent of Reb Avraham's tormentors was a young Communist named Natishka. Reb Avraham could hardly take a step without being followed by him. Natishka repeatedly warned him that he would end up before a firing squad if he didn't shape up.

Around this time Reb Avraham decided to apply for an exit visa to Israel. He was very surprised when his request was approved. In truth, Reb Avraham had mixed feelings about leaving Russia. On the one hand, he was grateful for the opportunity to spend the rest of his days in the Holy Land. Yet on the other, he worried about the fate of his brethren. Who would keep the embers of Judaism burning after he was gone?

As the date of his departure grew near, Reb Avraham spent most of his time in his beloved synagogue. Emboldened by the prospect of imminent freedom, he abandoned some of his usual precautions.

One evening Reb Avraham entered the shul and lit several memorial candles in remembrance of his family. His eyes filled with tears as he recalled their faces. In a voice choked with emotion he began to recite Psalms, and the sound carried out into the street...

At that moment, Natishka happened to pass by and decided to investigate. When he saw what the Jew was up to he became incensed.

"When will you ever learn?" he screamed at him. "When will you finally give up your obsolete practices?" Once and for all, he would teach the Jew a lesson. He began to roll up his sleeves...

Reb Avraham remained tranquil. Having already been beaten many times, there was nothing new about the prospect of physical violence. "Shema Yisrael!" ("Hear O Israel!"), he called out in a clear if somewhat trembling voice. "The L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One!"

It was then that he looked up and noticed Natishka's bare forearm, poised to strike. A long scar, evidence of an old burn, wound its way down his arm in a very familiar pattern...

"Shloimeleh!" Reb Avraham cried out. "Is that you, my son?"

The young Communist's face drained of color as his hand froze in midair. Inexplicably, his eyes were drawn to the candles' flames, as if they reminded him of something long hidden and repressed... A cry erupted from his throat as his eyes filled with tears. He embraced the elderly Jew and began to weep like a small child.

"Tatteh (father)!" he wailed inconsolably. "Tatteh, forgive me!"

Father and son marveled at how Divine Providence had brought them together. Not long afterward they both emigrated to Israel. And each week thereafter, as they gazed into the Shabbat candles, they pondered their indebtedness to them for their reunion.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the Weekly Torah Portion

**If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments...I will give you rains in their due season, and the earth shall yield its produce, and the tree its fruit (Lev. 26:3-4)**

How do we walk in G-d's statutes? asks Rashi. By studying His Torah, he concludes. Rabbi David of Kotsk once commented on the verse, "You should believe when one tells you, 'I have toiled and I have succeeded.'" He explained: Something a person achieves by dint of his own labor will endure, but something acquired too easily will not last. Just as effortlessly as it was won will it disappear. That is why our Sages urge us to toil night and day in our Torah study - so our learning and knowledge will be retained. (*Mishnat Yisrael*)

"The word 'im' ('if) is used to imply pleading and entreaty," the Talmud states, teaching us that G-d pleads, as it were, with every Jew: "Please walk in My statutes! Please keep My mitzvot!" G-d's request also endows us with the strength to overcome all difficulties that might stand in the way of observing Torah and mitzvot. (*Hayom Yom*)

As Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator explains, this refers to the mitzva of learning Torah. For the more Torah knowledge one acquires, the easier it is to observe the commandments, as Torah study itself saves a person from the Evil Inclination. (*Melo HaOmer*)

Why does the Torah devote so much detail to the physical reward for observing mitzvot? Isn't the spiritual benefit far more important? And aren't we really supposed to observe the Torah's laws without regard for reward, but simply because G-d wants us to? Most of us have not yet reached a state in which the promise of spiritual reward is greater motivation than physical reward. The Torah therefore goes to great lengths to describe the physical blessings to which all can relate. For the same reason, our Sages devoted much detail to the physical wonders and miracles that will take place in the Days of Moshiach. Although the ultimate good will be the open revelation of G-dliness, our appreciation of this will not be immediate. Rather, the world will have to first "mature" over a period of time in order to recognize this fact. (*Peninei HaTorah*)



### 7:41 PM Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area  
**21 Iyar // May 8**  
 Torah Portion Behar-Bechukosai  
 Ethics: Ch 5  
 Shabbat ends 8:46 PM

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