

L'Chaim

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Weekly Publication
for every Jewish Person

December 10, 2010 - 3 Teves, 5771

1149: VAYIGASH

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Living with the **REBBE**



In this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, Joseph's brothers return to Jacob and bring him the wonderful news that his son is still alive. "Joseph is yet alive, and is ruler over all the land of Egypt." Jacob, however, could not believe it was true until "he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him." Only then was he convinced, "and the spirit of Jacob their father was revived."

Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, explains that the wagons, "agalot" in Hebrew, were a special sign from Joseph to Jacob. The last time Joseph and his father learned Torah together, 22 years before, they had studied the portion of the "egla arufa" - the calf that is killed to atone for a murder whose perpetrator is unknown.

When Jacob saw the "agalot" (a word similar to "egla") he understood the allusion, and was thus convinced that Joseph was indeed alive.

Nonetheless, this explanation is problematical. Surely Jacob did not suspect his sons of telling a falsehood; why then did he not immediately believe them when they stated that "Joseph is yet alive"?

Did Jacob truly think that they had been fooled by an Egyptian stranger, who had somehow tricked them into believing that he was their long-lost brother?

The answer is simple. To a tzadik, a truly righteous person such as Jacob, "life" is not a matter of the physical body but of the soul. When the brothers told him that Joseph was not only alive but "the ruler over all the land of Egypt," he could not believe that his son had been able to maintain his spirituality and continue to live as a Jew in such abject circumstances. After all, Joseph was completely alone for so many years, in the most corrupt and abominable civilization in the ancient world. Not only was he surrounded by the lowest class of people, the brothers had stated that Joseph was their leader! How then could he "live" - truly "live," the spiritual life of a Jew?

When, however, Jacob was given the sign of the "agalot" and understood that Joseph had not forgotten his Torah learning, he realized that his son was on the same high spiritual plane as before his descent to Egypt.

Joseph had managed to remain a tzadik, despite his degraded surroundings. Only then was Jacob convinced that his son still "lived," and "the spirit of Jacob their father was revived." ■

Adapted from the works of the Rebbe

Superheros

Everybody wants to be a superhero. And why not? In a way it's a wonderful fantasy. To have the power to save lives, to help people in distress, to stop villains and evil-doers, simply and effectively.

And how much fun it would be to be different, to have a super-power. Everyone has his or her favorite super-power. Super-strength. Super-speed. Super-senses: X-ray vision or super-hearing. Super-magnetism. Flight - soaring like a bird, but without wings.

Not every superhero has a super-power, an enhancement of a natural trait (strong becomes super-strong) or some ability people don't normally possess (the ability to become invisible, to alter the mass of an object - making it heavier or lighter, to transform one's appearance like a chameleon). Some superheros have a device - a mystical ring, a rod of power, that sort of thing.

Other superheros are "just" super-skilled. A martial arts expert to the nth degree. A brilliant detective who's also a superb athlete.

Yes, it would be nice to be a superhero, to have a special power and help save the world.

But in one sense we already are superheros. All of us. We have a special power. More than one, actually. And when we use that super-power, we are literally helping hundreds and thousands and millions of people. We're also saving the world.

Our super-powers are the mitzvot (commandments) we do. Every time we do a mitzva, we help save worlds. To paraphrase

Maimonides, the world hangs in the balance, and the next good deed can tip the scales to the meritorious, bringing redemption not only to the individual, but to the whole world.

Indeed, the effect of a mitzva reverberates through all the worlds and all the planes of existence, elevating them - and all of the creation within each world - to a higher awareness of G-dliness. It's a spiritual rescue.

Each mitzva has the power - the super-power - to affect a different aspect of existence - the existence of the individual and of worlds.

Nor is the impact of a mitzva limited to the specific spiritual source, or even to the individual exercising his or her spiritual super power. Assistants and aides - sidekicks - get rescued along with you, the spiritual superhero. That is, anyone - Jew or non-Jew - who helps you do a mitzva, however indirect that help, is carried along. The grocer who sells you the kosher food; the delivery guy who brings the food to the grocer; the warehouse manager who assigns the shift to the delivery guy.

But if each of us emphasizes a particular mitzva - super-power - one that we do with extra effort - super-strength, we also all share one super-power, regardless. That's the power to transform selves into someone completely new. Through teshuva, repentance, we all have that transformative ability.

So the next time you feel inspired by a superhero or dream about having a super-power and saving the world - remember you already are a superhero, you already have a super-power, and you do save not just one world, but many worlds every time you do a mitzva. ■

**MEZUZAH
DID YOU
KNOW???**

When a mezuzah that has been removed -- for checking, when renovations are being done, or for any other reason -- is remounted, the blessing should be recited only if the mezuzah was off the doorposts for at least one night. If you are also adding new mezuzahs at this time, it is preferable to recite the blessing on a new one (providing that it is mounted on a door that requires a blessing).

It is preferred to have all of the mezuzahs returned to their original doorposts, or at least to the same type of entrance way (i.e., from one bedroom door to another, or from one archway to another). ■

**A WORD FROM
THE DIRECTOR**

Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman

The Tenth of Tevet, which occurs next Friday, December 17, is a fast day. It commemorates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, which ultimately resulted in the destruction of the First Holy Temple in 422 b.c.e.

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 Beit HaMikdash.

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. ■

The Rebbe Writes

23rd of Adar, 5723 [1963]

I received your letter some time ago, but this is the first opportunity to reply to it.

You write about your background and how you have found your way to the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Lod [Israel]. I am gratified to note that you have adjusted yourself so well.

Your Chassidic ancestry certainly stands you in good stead, for spiritual qualities are hereditary, especially deep-rooted ones which the Chassidic teachings and way of life cultivate.

With regard to your question at the conclusion of your letter it is hardly necessary to seek guidance from across the sea when you are at the Lubavitcher Yeshiva and the Mashpi'im [mentors] and Rosh Hayeshiva [head of the yeshiva] are able and willing to help the students. However, since you have asked them of me I will reply briefly:

1. Re: Pronunciation, whether Sephardic or Ashkenazic, you should daven [pray] in the way you are used to, and not complicate matters by a change.
2. Re: Zohar, your question is most surprising, for as it is well known that the Zohar is an integral part of the Torah-Shebe'al-peh [the Oral Law], it is not a case of emphasis by the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the first Rebbe of Chabad], for it was just as sacred also to the Gaon of Vilna, though in certain respects his shitah [path] differed from that of the Alter Rebbe.
3. You question the propriety of religious people who give expression to their joy and enthusiasm by dancing, etc., in front of the Aron Hakodesh [the Holy Ark], and you wonder if a Chillul Hashem [desecration of G-d's name] is involved.

But of course, no chillul is involved there, because:

- a. This is the expression of true joy with the Torah and mitzvot [commandments]; on the contrary it would be a chillul not to participate. Moreover, it is not something which is limited to Chassidim, but a basic principle of halachah [Torah law] incumbent upon all Jews, based on the Torah and the famous narrative in Tanach [Torah, Prophets, Writings]. See also Rambam, end of Hilchoth Lulov, where the subject is treated (more) at length.
 - b. Even when the observer does not feel the same degree of joy, but being in the company of Jews expressing their joy with the Torah, if he should not participate, it would be almost like a counter-demonstration, not only in relation to the cause of simcha [joy]. See Igeres Hakodesh 24 by the Alter Rebbe, end of p. 274, and note it well there.
4. In reference to Tanya, where it is stated that the second soul of the Jew is truly a part of G-dliness, and you ask why is the Jew singled out, since all humanity descended from Adam?

The answer is that the distinction came with the Avot [Patriarchs] and especially the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, when the souls were assigned their particular place and standing, though all souls were included in the soul of Adam.

In fact, our Sages declare that even among Jews, the various souls are related to particular aspects of the souls of Adam HaRishon (the first man).

5. You ask for an explanation of a statement in one of the general messages, a statement to the effect that we are living in the era of "Ikvisa DiMishicho" [the footsteps of Moshiach].

This is based on many statements of my father-in-law (ztz"l). See also the signs of this era as indicated by Chazal [the Sages] (see end of Sota). It is not difficult to see these signs in our present generation.

I trust you are applying yourself with devotion and diligence to your learning of both nigleh [revealed Torah] and Chassidus, with the view to practice maalim b'Kodesh [ascending in holiness].

May your learning be the kind that prompts action: the fulfillment of the mitzvot in daily life. ■



SLICE OF

LIFE

An Example

by Yehudis Cohen

I look around the room. I would call the meeting a preview of the "ingathering of the exiles" except that we are sitting in Brooklyn, New York and not Jerusalem, Israel. So I will call it a mini-UN, except this gathering is not anti-zionist or anti-Israel. Perhaps I should just say what it really is: A group of Machon Chana students who have come to hear Dr. Yaakov Hanoka, a Lubavitcher chasid, speak about the relationship of Torah and science.

Machon Chana is a yeshiva for young women, most of whom were not brought up in Torah-observant homes, who have decided to devote themselves to serious Torah study. The women in the room hail from France, Venezuela, Rumania, Brazil, Germany, Israel, Guatemala, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Russia, England, Canada and the United States.

Dr. Hanoka has a PhD in solid state physics and has worked on solar cells for the past 35 years. He has 70 publications and 56 patents in this field. He is a founder and vice president of Evergreen Solar. Dr. Hanoka is co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of Massachusetts-based start-up 7Solar Technologies.

Dr. Hanoka begins by telling the women what it was like to become a Torah observant Jew in the days before there were yeshivas for "late beginners." He describes being involved in organizing special Shabbaton weekends for college students together with Rabbi Shmuel Lew, who is now an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in London, England. "We used to have 17 students come to the Shabbatons in those days," says Dr. Hanoka. "You can imagine how pleased I was when the Chabad House Campus Shabbaton this year drew 750 students from

across the country!"

The Lubavitcher Rebbe took a personal interest in Dr. Hanoka when he first arrived in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and began studying at the Central Lubavitcher Yeshiva in 770 Eastern Parkway. "When I had a private audience with the Rebbe soon after I came to Crown Heights, the Rebbe advised me, 'For the first three - six months that you are here, don't trouble yourself the question "What am I doing here." ' Dr. Hanoka says that it was excellent advice because had he allowed himself such musings, it would not have given him the opportunity to experience and absorb Chasidic life and teachings as he did.

A few months into his yeshiva studies, Dr. Hanoka made plans to go to Penn State University to see his friends there. Before leaving, he had a private audience with the Rebbe. The Rebbe told him that since he was going to be on campus before the holiday of Purim, he should speak with his friends about the upcoming holiday and the special mitzvot (commandments) associated with the day. Dr. Hanoka told the Rebbe that he was not comfortable with being put in the position of being an "example" to his friends. The Rebbe responded, "Every Jew has to be an example, whether he likes it or not. So don't feel bad about being an example, because you are one whether you like it or not."

When Dr. Hanoka completed the basic part of his yeshiva studies, he told the Rebbe that he wanted to continue with advanced studies, receive Rabbinic ordination, and become a full-time rabbi. The Rebbe responded by telling Dr. Hanoka, "You will do much more for Judaism by having three letters after your name than by becoming a rabbi." And with that, Dr. Hanoka returned to college, eventually receiving his doctorate in physics.

Dr. Hanoka and his family settled in Boston, Massachusetts. During his visits to Crown Heights, Dr. Hanoka would sometimes have private audiences with the Rebbe. "As a chasid of the Rebbe, I expected the Rebbe would ask me about my concentration during prayer or if my Torah study was up to par. But the Rebbe would inevitably ask me, 'What is going on with your papers? Have you written anything new lately?' "

Dr. Hanoka segued into a fascinating lecture on a description of the Biblical flood, accounts found in older civilizations, history of the idea, and recent scientific findings - including proofs from the 2004 Tsunami in the Indian Ocean - that wove everything into a single coherent narrative.

At the end of the lecture, Dr. Hanoka opened the floor to questions, and they flowed easily: How can a person who believes that G-d created the world in six days engage in scientific research that requires one to seek the truth without preconceived notions? What do you say about some Orthodox Jewish scientists' view that the six days mentioned in the Torah are not six 24-hour days but rather six periods of time? What is the Torah-view on when and where dinosaurs existed? What about the (formerly) much-touted Torah codes?

The good doctor answered all of the questions with patience and aplomb, much to the satisfaction of the young women who were at the lecture.

The gathering concluded with a short game of "Jewish geography" when one of the students responded to Dr. Hanoka's comment that his family originally comes from Greece. Her grandmother is also from Greece. "Thessaloniki (Salonika), to be exact." Yes, the same city as the Hanokas! **Interested in learning more? Machon Chana** (www.machonchana.org, 718-735-0030) and **Hadar HaTorah Men's Yeshiva** (www.hadarhatorah.org, 718-735-0250) are each holding a 10-day "Yeshivacation" experience from December 23, 2010 - January 2, 2011.


What's In A Name?

Natan means "gift." Natan (II Samuel 5:15) was the prophet who stated that the dynasty of King David would be perpetually established. The Askenazic pronunciation is Noson or Nusin.

Nina is from the Hebrew meaning "grand-daughter" or "great-grand-daughter."

Moshiach Matters

Our Sages explain that, in contrast to the other living beings which were created in pairs, man was created alone. Why? So that every individual should say, "The world was created for me," and thus appreciate that his conduct can affect the totality of existence. Thus the coming of the Redemption depends on every single individual. Simply put, were people to open their eyes, as said above, the door would open and Moshiach would enter. **(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 7 Tevet, 5752-1991)**

Important Times <i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday/Friday 7:00am <i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 5:15pm Shabbos 4:50pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club</u> 8:15am <u>Kabbalah of Cholent</u> 9:05am <u>Shacharis</u> 9:30am Light Candles 5:02pm Shabbat Ends 6:00pm	December 10 – 17	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace www.chabad.org Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	Re-printed by: Chabad of Scottsdale (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org  The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362
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If Once Happened

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chasidism, expected all members of his household to be sparing when it came to the way they spent money. "Since my household is supported by the public, and our Sages teach that the Torah looks askance at wasting Jewish money, it is only proper that we live frugally," he would explain.

One time, when one of his grandchildren came to him wearing an expensive belt, Rabbi Shneur Zalman questioned him, "Are you such a rich man that you should be wearing such an expensive belt?"

The grandson was silent so Rabbi Shneur Zalman continued interrogating him concerning money matters. "Tell me, how much money did you receive as a dowry?"

"Two thousand rubles," answered the grandson.

"What are your plans for the money?" questioned Rabbi Shneur Zalman.

"I am planning on giving it to a successful merchant. In this way I will be able to earn something on it."

"Perhaps," countered Rabbi Shneur Zalman, "he will neither return you your capital nor any interest?"

"That is impossible," argued the grandson. "This merchant is very wealthy and reliable."

"What difference does it make if he is wealthy now?" argued Rabbi Shneur Zalman. "The wheel of fortune turns. He could become poor."

"What do you suggest I do with my money?" asked the grandson.

"My advice to you is to put the entire sum into this box," said Rabbi Shneur Zalman, pointing to a charity box.

The grandson was certain that the Rebbe was joking, though he didn't think his grandfather was one to joke about such things.

"I really mean what I said. I suggest that you give the entire sum to charity. In this way, the 'capital' and the 'interest' will remain intact. I am afraid that if you invest with some wealthy merchant, you might lose both."

The grandson heard what the Rebbe said and nevertheless, decided to invest his money with a merchant who was not only trustworthy and wealthy, but a scholar, too. Several months later, however, a fire destroyed everything the merchant owned and he was reduced to poverty.

Later, when the Rebbe asked his grandson how his investment had fared, the young man related the catastrophe which had befallen the merchant.

"Why didn't you listen to my advice and put the money in this charity box?" admonished the Rebbe. "Had you done that, then the capital and the interest would have remained intact. Why do my chasidim not trust the advice of their Rebbe? Let me tell you a story about the simple faith of the people of Volhynia."

"Once, in the midst of the bitter cold of winter, I was on my way home from visiting my Rebbe, the Maggid of Mezritch. I was nearly frostbitten by the time we reached a Jewish inn.

"How long have you been living here?" I asked the elderly innkeeper.

"For nearly fifty years," he answered me.

"And are there other Jews nearby? Do you have a minyan to pray with, people with whom to celebrate the holidays?"

"Only on the High Holidays do I go to a nearby village to pray together with a congregation."

"Why don't you live in that village so that you can be together with other Jews?" I asked.

"How would I make a living?" he questioned me.

"If G-d can find a livelihood for a hundred families, don't you think He can do the same for one more?" I asked him.

"I also mentioned to him that I am a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch.

"He left the room immediately. Not more than one half hour later, I saw a few wagons parked in front of the inn, loaded with all kinds of household items and furniture. I saw the innkeeper near the wagons and asked him, "What is going on here?"

"I am moving to the other town, as you told me," he answered simply.

"You see what strong faith that old man had in my Rebbe?" Rabbi Shneur Zalman challenged his grandson. "I only had to mention that I was a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and he dropped everything immediately, including his home and livelihood for fifty years. He was not even a chasid. And you heard from me twice that you should place the money in the charity box and yet you did not listen. ■

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad is not with me (Gen. 44:34)

Every Jew must ask himself: How can I go up to my Father in heaven "and the lad is not with me" - without bringing the days of my youth? A person must be especially vigilant that he not squander away his younger years.

(Ma'ayana Shel Torah)

And his brothers could not answer him, for they were terrified at his presence (literally "his face") (Gen. 45:3)

When Joseph revealed himself to them, he no longer hid the light of his face from them. At that moment they truly recognized him, and were dumfounded by the light in his face.

(Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen)

And behold, your own eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you (Gen. 45:12)

This was the first time that Joseph was speaking to his brothers in their native language. Prior to this time the brothers had spoken to him in Hebrew, but Joseph had answered in the Egyptian tongue. The only time a person can recognize another through his voice is when he has previously heard him speak the same language. When a person speaks a different language, his accent is different and it is difficult to identify him. Because Joseph was now speaking Hebrew his brothers would be able to recognize him.

(Our Sages)

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my wanderings are one hundred and thirty years; the days of the years of my life were few and bad" (Gen. 47:9)

How could Jacob have said this when the average life span after the generation of the flood was one hundred and twenty years? Jacob was the third of the Patriarchs and thus most intimately bound up with the third and eternal Holy Temple, to be built by Moshiach. All his life Jacob yearned for the everlasting peace and tranquility of the Messianic era. For as long, then, as the Redemption did not come, Jacob regarded the years of his life as qualitatively few and meager, because they did not contain that which is most important of all.

(The Rebbe, Shabbat Parshat Mikeitz, 5752)