

# L'Chaim

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Weekly Publication  
for every Jewish Person

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1151: SHEMOS

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## Living with the **REBBE**



In this week's Torah portion, Shemot, we read the incident where Moses came upon two Jews (Datan and Aviram) in the midst of an argument. When one man lifted his hand to strike the other, Moses cried out, "Rasha! (Evil one!) Why do you strike your fellow?" Moses called him a rasha even though he had not yet delivered the blow, as the very act of raising one's hand against another person is forbidden.

Any individual who lifts his hand against another is termed a rasha, even if he does not actually hit him. But why is it prohibited to raise one's hand?" Why is it considered such a serious transgression?

To explain:

Man was created for the sole purpose of serving his Maker, to learn Torah and perform mitzvot (commandments) in accordance with G-d's will.

The human body is comprised of many different limbs, each one of which must be properly utilized in the service of G-d. Some mitzvot are performed with the feet, others through the power of speech, and yet others with the nose. Each and every limb has a specific purpose, designed to carry out its own particular commandments.

So too has the human hand been created to perform G-d's mitzvot. There are many commandments that are done with the hands: donning tefilin, building a suka, lighting Shabbat candles, etc.

The hand is especially suited to perform the mitzva of tzedaka (charity). With our hands we take a coin and give it to a poor person or place it in a tzedaka box, as the Torah enjoins us: "You shall surely open up your hand."

The primary function of the hand is to do good for others. When a person argues with his fellow man and lifts his hand as if to strike him, he is using that hand to bring him harm - the opposite of the purpose for which it was created.

For this reason Moses called the man "evil one," for it is evil to use the hand which G-d has created for good in a negative fashion. Indeed, it is a serious transgression to pervert the potential for good into a potential for evil. Moses therefore became angry even before the blow was delivered.

A person who hits his fellow and causes him pain commits a sin "between man and his fellow man."

A person who lifts his hand in anger, even though he does not strike the other person, commits a sin "between man and G-d" by distorting the very purpose for which the hand was created.

Let us therefore use our hands - and all our limbs - to carry out G-d's will and serve Him. For that is the true purpose for which man was created. ■

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 31*

### **Jury Duty**

Jury Duty - It's one of those things every good citizen should do - has to do - but which often is just inconvenient.

First, the notice never seems to come at a good time, if there ever is a good time.

Then there's the parking. Why are courtrooms always placed in the most difficult-to-park parts of town?

Inside it's a giant waiting room - and we do mean waiting. With lots of noise and a blaring TV. So you can't get any work done. Or reading. Or resting.

Finally you get called to a judge's court (the lawyers just spent three hours trying to settle - three hours of your time wasted waiting in the "jury pool" - and couldn't).

The judge gives you a lecture. The prosecuting attorney gives you a lecture. The defense attorney gives you a lecture. Then they ask you a lot of questions, to make sure you can be an impartial and open minded juror.

If you're lucky (!?), you get selected. A fundamental right: trial by a jury of one's peers.

If you ever have to go to court, you want the jury to be composed of people - just like you! So, maybe it's worth a little time and sacrifice.

How often you're called to serve varies from country to country. But as a Jew, you're on duty every day.

Every day you're called away from the conveniences - the "creature comforts" - of life. Every day you have to wait - prepare, really - in the jury pool until the judge is ready to begin the trial. Every day you have to listen to the

prosecutor and the defender. Every day you have to weigh the evidence. Every day, you have to decide.

What are we talking about? Who's on trial? You are.

Every day we put ourselves on trial. We ask ourselves - did we perform a mitzva (commandment)? Did we use an opportunity we had to help another person. Did we give some extra charity?

The "trial" takes each time we pray. (In fact, one of the meanings of the Hebrew word for prayer, "tefila," is [self-]judgment.) That's part of what happens when we pray - we make an assessment of our accomplishments and missed opportunities, of mitzvot done and transgressions committed.

Our daily prayers precede the nightly assessment. The prayers for reciting the Shema before bed include a section for self-judgment. We are to judge ourselves and correct ourselves.

There's a famous story about the early Chasidic master, Rabbi Zushe of Anipol. Shortly before his death, his disciples came to visit him and saw that he was deeply concerned. They asked him what was troubling him. He replied, "I am worried that I won't have an answer for the Heavenly Tribunal." They asked him what he meant.

"When I stand before the Heavenly Court to be judged," he explained, "if I am asked why was I not like Moses, I will have an answer. I was not Moses. If asked why was I not like Rabbi Akiva, I will answer, 'I was not Rabbi Akiva.'

"But if they ask me, 'Zushe, why were you not like Zushe?' - what shall I answer them?" ■

## MEZUZAH DID YOU KNOW???

A house that is not designated for permanent dwelling does not require a mezuzah, therefore the *sukkah* "on *Sukkos*" requires no mezuzah. Similarly, those stores that are constructed on the market day solely for the duration of the market, and are afterwards dismantled; or if they remain without being used [these] likewise require no mezuzah. However, stores that are permanently open for business require a mezuzah. ■  
(*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman

This coming Monday (December 27), the 20th of Hebrew month of Tevet, the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Moses Maimonides, otherwise known as the Rambam.

In his major work, the Mishne Torah, the Rambam enumerates and details all 613 laws of the Torah. He places the laws relating to the Jewish king, and Moshiach, at the very end of his work.

In the introduction to these laws he states that the Jews were commanded to fulfill three mitzvot upon conquering and entering the Land of Israel: To appoint a king; to wipe out the descendants of Amalek; and to build [G-d's] Chosen House.

It would seem that these mitzvot should have been mentioned much earlier in his work if they were, in fact, so important.

However, the Rambam chose to organize the Mishne Torah in this fashion to emphasize that the true and complete performance of all the mitzvot of the Torah will be attained when a king rules over Israel.

The Rambam then defines Moshiach as a king, who will not only redeem the Jews from exile, but also restore the observance of the Torah and its mitzvot to its complete state.

For many, this would seem a rather novel approach. Yet, the Talmud states that "The world was created solely for Moshiach." This being the case, we certainly must do everything in our power to hasten his arrival.

What is within the power and reach of each individual, great and small?

Good deeds, charity, studying concepts associated with Moshiach and the Final Redemption, fostering peace between family, friends, and co-workers, and actively waiting for and anticipating Moshiach's his arrival each and every day. ■

## The Rebbe Writes

21st of Sivan, 5725 [1965]

You have undoubtedly received my regards through Rabbi -, who had also brought me your regards...

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of May 9th, also your works on your scientific research. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and trouble in sending me this material. Although the subject matter is entirely beyond my province, I trust that I will be able to glean some general ideas from your writings, and perhaps also some specific ones.

At the risk of not sounding very "scientific" to you, I nevertheless wish to express my hope that you will also apply your research work to good advantage in the service of G-d, in accordance with the principle, "Know Him in all thy ways." Indeed, the discoveries in the natural sciences have thrown new light on the wonders of Creation, and the modern trend has consequently been towards the recognition of the unity pervading Nature. In fact, with every advancement in science, the underlying unity in the physical world has become more clearly discernible; so much so, that science is now searching for the ideal formula which would comprise all the phenomena of the physical world in one comprehensive equation. With a little further insight it can be seen that the unity in Nature is the reflection of true monotheism in its Jewish concept. For, as we Jews conceive of monotheism, it is not merely the belief that there is only One G-d, but that G-d's unity transcends also the physical world, so that there is only one reality, namely G-d. However, inasmuch as Creation included all the souls, etc., there has been created a multiplicity and diversity in Nature - insofar as the created beings themselves are concerned, without, however, effecting any change in the Creator, as explained at length in Chasidus.

You ask me about my reference to the Rambam and where it contains in substance, though in different terms, the concept of the conscious and subconscious of modern psychology. I had in mind a passage in Hilchos Gerushin (end of chapter 2), in the Rambam's magnum opus, *Yad Hachazakah*. The gist of that passage is as follows: There are certain matters in Jewish Law, the performance of which requires free volition, not coercion. However, where the Jewish Law requires specific performance, it is permitted to use coercive measures until the reluctant party declares "I am willing," and his performance is valid and considered voluntary. There seems here an obvious contradiction: If it is permitted to compel performance, why is it necessary that the person should declare himself "willing"? And if compulsory performance is not valid, what good is it if the person declares himself "willing" under compulsion?

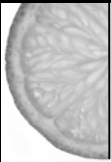
And here comes the essential point of the Rambam's explanation:

Every Jew, regardless of his status and station, is essentially willing to do all that he is commanded to do by our Torah. However, sometimes the yetzer (hara) [evil inclination] prevails over his better judgment and prevents him from doing what he has to do in accordance with the Torah. When, therefore, beis din [Rabbinical court] compels a Jew to do something, it is not with a view to creating in him a new desire, but rather to release him from the compulsion which had paralyzed his desire, thus enabling him to express his true self. Under these circumstances, when he declares "I am willing," it is an authentic declaration.

To put the above in contemporary terminology: The conscious state of a Jew can be affected by external pressures that induce states of mind and even behavior which are contrary to his subconscious, which is the Jew's essential nature. When the external pressures are removed, it does not constitute a change or transformation of his essential nature, but, on the contrary, is merely the reassertion of his innate and true character.

To a person of your background it is unnecessary to point out that nothing in the above can be construed as a confirmation of other aspects of the Freudian theory to the effect that man's psyche is primarily governed by libido, etc. For these ideas are contrary to those of the Torah, whose view is that the human being is essentially good (as the Rambam, above). The only similarity is in the general idea that human nature is a composite of a substratum and various layers, especially insofar as the Jew is concerned, as above.

I will conclude with the traditional blessing which I have already conveyed to you through Rabbi-: to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness, as a daily experience through the year. ■



# SLICE OF LIFE

## The Closed Gate

by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

"Hallo!" one of the men who knew a bit of Spanish asked the guard sitting in his little booth on the side, "Que Pasa? Que Pasa el Porta?" But it didn't help, the guard refused to open up.

The scene was a slaughterhouse in South America. The bearded Jews were all Shochtim (trained in all the details of "ritual" slaughtering). They had come from all over the world, about 50 of them, to work here for a few months, earn money to support their families for the year, and return to their homes.

The work was hard, with long hours. The slaughterhouse was a good hour's drive from town and they were tired. "Hey open the door already!" one of them pounded on the gate. "Open!"

"No no!" the guard yelled back, followed by something in Spanish.

"He says he won't open the door until everyone is here," the Spanish-speaking shochet explained. "He says someone is missing and he's not opening 'til he's here."

"No one is missing! Just tell him to open up!" shouted one of the men. "He's making us crazy. We want to go home; we have a long ride ahead of us!"

But the guard wouldn't budge. So they talked it over between themselves; they had to come up with a plan of action.

"Listen," one of them suggested, "either we force him to open the door or we make a count and see if he's right. Maybe someone is missing." And sure enough, one man was missing!

No one could figure how it happened, but they counted again and Zalman, the Chabad

Chasid, wasn't there. Zalman was a quiet fellow so they hadn't noticed his absence. How the guard noticed no one could figure out, but now besides wanting to go home, they began to get worried about their colleague. They went back to the factory to find him.

They searched and searched for a half and hour to no avail. He had disappeared into thin air.

"Hey! Maybe he didn't come today," one of them suggested.

"No, he was on my shift," said another. "I even talked to him today. But where is he?"

They looked in the offices, in the kitchen, in the restrooms. Until someone yelled out, "I found him! Here he is! Call an ambulance! Come quick!"

It seems that Zalman had entered one of the huge freezer rooms and while he was deep inside someone closed the door and turned off the lights. Maybe Zalman had become confused, or perhaps he tripped in the darkness, but in any case when they found him he was laying unconscious on the floor.

They pulled him out, covered him with blankets and began rubbing his body, and by the time the ambulance arrived he was already on his feet, drinking hot soup and ready to go home. It was nothing short of a miracle and of course they couldn't stop telling Zalman how the guard was the one who had saved him.

When they all returned to the gate the guard smiled, pressed the button that opened the door and everyone filed past shaking his hand and blessing him. No one knew Spanish well enough to explain to him what happened but when it came Zalman's turn he gave him a big hug, looked him in the eyes and said "Amigo."

But there still remained a few mysteries. First, how did the guard notice one Jew from 50 was missing? After all, they all looked and even dressed pretty much alike. Was he some sort of genius?

The shochet that knew Spanish went back to ask him and several minutes later returned with the explanation.

"The guard said that he has no idea which one Zalman is. Just that every morning when we arrive and everyone files past him, the only one that says 'hello' to him is Zalman. Then when we finish every day the same Zalman is the only one that says goodbye to him on the way out!

"So today he remembered that he had heard a 'good morning' but no 'good bye' so it wasn't hard for him to figure out that someone was missing! Zalman's greetings saved his life."

But that wasn't the end of it. They had another question. Zalman was probably the most introverted of the entire crowd!

"Of all people, why was it you that always said hello?" they asked him.

"I'll tell you why," Zalman answered. "Did you ever see the Lubavitcher Rebbe giving out dollars? (For many years thousands of people would file by the Rebbe every Sunday morning to receive directly from him a blessing and a dollar to give to charity.) Or saying 'L'chaim' to thousands of Chasidim, one by one? Well I did and it really impressed me.

"I thought to myself, if such a great person as the Rebbe can give so much time and attention to everyone, I should at least be able to say 'hello' to people.

"So I decided that even though it's completely against my nature, I'm going to do it. And it saved my life." ■

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## Moshiach Matters

When G-d called to Moses from the burning bush, He repeated Moses' name twice. G-d was hinting at the two eras when Moses will teach Torah to the Jewish people: once in his lifetime and once in the days of Moshiach. In the Messianic Era, we will ask Abraham to teach us Torah. Abraham will say, "Go to Isaac, he studied more than me." Isaac will tell us, "Go to Jacob, he studied more than me." Jacob will say, "Go to Moses, he learned directly from G-d." And Moses will teach us. But there will come a time when all Jews, including Moses will learn Torah from Moshiach himself. ■

(Zohar and Baal HaTurim)

## What's In A Name?

**RINA** is from the Hebrew meaning "jubilation." It is in the last of the seven blessings from the marriage ceremony: Blessed are You...who created joy and happiness, bride and groom, gladness and jubilation, cheer and delight, love, friendship, harmony and fellowship." Although Rina was a male descendant of Judah, the name is primarily used for females.

**ROI** means "my shepherd." It is sometimes pronounced, "Roy."

## News

**Full Devotion** Full Devotion is the translation of a discourse delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe barely two years after accepting the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch. It discusses the task of continuously choosing to look beyond ourselves, with full devotion, to see G-d's love for us, which in turn, will make us successful in loving and serving Him. The newest release in the Chassidic Heritage Series of Kehot Publishing.

**Beyond the Dollar Line** In 1954, in the early days of the leadership of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Chana Sharfstein settled in the Crown Heights community as a newlywed. The stories in this book encompass 50 years of Mrs. Sharfstein's experiences from 1954 until 2004, a period of great changes with incredible progress for the Jewish women the Lubavitcher Rebbe empowered. ■

<p><b>Important Times</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>December 24 – 31</b></span></p> <p><i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am   Sunday/Friday 8:00am   Monday/Thursday 6:45am  <i>Minchah/Maariv</i> 5:15pm   Shabbos 4:50pm  <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club 8:15am</u>   <u>Kabbalah of Cholent 9:05am</u>   <u>Shacharis 9:30am</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Light Candles 5:07pm</b>      <b>Shabbat Ends 6:06pm</b></p>	<p>Brought to you by:  <b>Chabad-Lubavitch in  Cyberspace</b>  <a href="http://www.chabad.org">www.chabad.org</a>  Copyright © 2010  Lubavitch Youth Organization  <a href="http://www.lchaimweekly.org">www.lchaimweekly.org</a></p>	<p>Re-printed by:  <b>Chabad of Scottsdale</b>  (480) 998-1410  <a href="http://chabadofscottsdale.org">chabadofscottsdale.org</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p><b>The Jewish Learning Center  of Scottsdale 480.443.5362</b></p>
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**It Once Happened** Today, Maimonides (known by the acronym Rambam) is universally held in the greatest respect. Among his contemporaries, however, many were suspicious of his level of religious observance. The great rabbis of Germany sent Rabbi Meir to Spain to ascertain investigate this controversial rabbi.

When Rabbi Meir arrived in Cordoba, he proceeded to the Rambam's residence. A servant admitted him and announced that his master would join him shortly. Soon Rambam entered the room and greeted his visitor, and invited him to dine. But when Rabbi Meir entered the dining room and glanced at his dinner plate, he felt faint. One of the items on his plate looked identical to a human hand. Could the renowned Rambam be a cannibal? he wondered. A very queasy Rabbi Meir politely refused any food, claiming not to be hungry.

Rambam suggested that perhaps a glass of wine might perk his appetite. "Patrus," he called to his servant, "please go to the cellar and bring up a jug of wine." Again Rabbi Meir was confused. Patrus was obviously a non-Jewish name, and yet Rambam was sending this servant to fetch wine in violation of the prohibition against drinking wine touched by a non-Jew. It was beginning to seem that what he had heard about Rambam's heretical tendencies was true.

Rabbi Meir declined the wine, pleading exhaustion from his long journey. When Rambam offered him hospitality for the night, he was only too glad to accept and retired to his room to ruminate on his observations. Before he retired, Rabbi Meir overheard Rambam telling Patrus to kill a calf for the next day's repast. This was too much to bear. Had the great Rambam fallen so far from Jewish observance as to eat meat which was not even slaughtered according to the laws of the holy Torah?

That night, despite his exhaustion, Rabbi Meir was more awake than asleep. He concluded that he had no choice but to confront Rambam directly. He would reveal his identity and the purpose of his visit, and then he would demand an explanation for Rambam's audacious behavior.

Rabbi Meir had barely fallen asleep when morning dawned. He was awakened by a knock on his door. There stood Rambam's servant, saying that his master wished a word with him. Rabbi Meir nervously made his way to the room where Rambam stood with his hand out and a broad smile on his face. "My dear friend and colleague, I know exactly who you are and why you have come. I am aware of the fact that the great rabbis of Germany have sent you to examine the level of my observance of the laws of Torah. I also know why you refused to partake of any food or wine yesterday at my table. I know that you were so upset that you spent the entire night pacing the floor, worrying about my eating human flesh, drinking prohibited wine and eating meat which was not properly slaughtered.

"You may ease your mind, for now I will explain all of these apparent transgressions and put an end to your doubts. After you hear my words, you will agree that all the suspicions which have been voiced regarding me are untrue, and furthermore, you will understand how dangerous it is to cast suspicion on a person based only on outward appearances.

"The food which you took to be a human hand is actually a type of vegetable which grows in this part of Spain, but not in Germany. It is very nutritious, and as a doctor, I am careful to eat a proper diet."

"Of course," thought Rabbi Meir, "how could I have suspected him of cannibalism. But still, didn't Rambam drink the forbidden wine and eat non-kosher meat?"

Rambam continued his explanation, refuting Rabbi Meir's suspicions about the wine. "My servant, Patrus, is an observant Jew. Surely you will recall that the father of one of the Sages of the Talmud was also called Patrus - Rabbi Yose ben Patrus is mentioned in Bereishit Rabba!"

Again Rabbi Meir regretted his doubts. Now he was sure that his final question would be explained away and he waited for Rambam's elucidation.

"You know that a calf which was removed from the womb of a cow which was slaughtered according to the laws of Torah is considered as if it had been slaughtered according to the law. This is the calf I wished to serve in honor of your visit," the Rambam concluded.

When he heard these words, Rabbi Meir was so overcome with emotion that tears poured from his eyes. Thinking of all the calumny which was heaped upon this great Sage was more than he could bear, and Rabbi Meir made a contrite apology for himself and the others who had sent him. What a terrible mistake they had made, judging the scholar from afar. Rambam accepted the apology and the two parted as friends.

In the many towns and cities Rabbi Meir passed through along his return route from Spain to Germany, he made it a point to announce: "From Moshe our teacher to Moshe the son of Maimon, there was never such a Moshe." ■

**All the soul(s) that came out of the loins of Jacob were 70 soul(s) (Ex. 1:5)** The Children of **Thoughts that Count**  
Israel are referred to in the collective singular, "soul," whereas Esau's descendants are described in the plural, "souls." The sphere of holiness is characterized by awe of G-d, self-nullification and unity (like 2 royal ministers who, despite their disagreements, become totally nullified and of 1 mind in the presence of the king.) The opposite of holiness, however, is characterized by disunity and plurality. (Siddur, with Chasidic notes)

**And behold, it was a weeping boy... and she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children" (Ex. 2:6)**

How could Pharaoh's daughter have recognized that the child was Jewish, just from his cry? This is because a Jewish cry is unique; even when he weeps, a Jew is filled with hope. (Rabbi Mordechai Chaim of Slonim)

Why "one of the Hebrews' children" and not "a Hebrew child"? As Rashi notes, the baby's cry was stronger than that of an infant, "like a young lad's." When Pharaoh's daughter was surprised by its intensity, Miriam explained that it was "one of the Hebrews' children": not an individual voice, but the collective crying of all the Jewish babies who had been sentenced to drown. (Meir Einei Yesharim)

**And she called his name Moses... because out of the water have I drawn him (Gen. 2:10)**

The name Moses ("Moshe" in Hebrew) comes from the verb "to draw out," and is in the present tense, indicating an ongoing action. This alludes to the task of the true Jewish leader, which is to elevate the Jew from the depths of physicality and guide him toward the shores of spiritual safety. Moses, the first Jewish leader, was the prototype for all time; his actions are continued by the "reflection of Moses" that exists in every generation. (Teivot Shalom)