

# L'Chaim

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October 15, 2010 - 7 Cheshvan, 5771

1141: LECH-LECHA

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Alan Welner, President

## Living with the REBBE



Although our Sages tell us that Abraham our Forefather had already "recognized his Creator" by the age of three, no mention of Abraham's early life is actually made in the Torah (aside from an account of his genealogy).

In fact, this entire time period, during which Abraham devoted himself to spreading the belief in One G-d among mankind, to the point of being thrown into a fiery furnace for his convictions, is omitted.

The Torah begins its narration of Abraham's extraordinary life in this week's portion, Lech Lecha, with the words, "And the L-rd said to Abram: Go out of your land, out of your birthplace and from your father's house" - a commandment Abraham received when he was already 75 years old!

Every word and letter in the Torah is exact, revealing countless lessons for us to apply in our daily lives. The Torah's omission of Abraham's early years is therefore significant, and contains a valuable teaching about the essence of the Jew.

Up until the age of 75, Abraham was like any other person. Blessed with a gifted mind, he was able to reach the intellectual understanding that G-d existed. Yet it was only at the age of 75 that Abraham's life as a Jew, and as the progenitor of the Jewish people, truly began.

For no matter how strong a person's belief in G-d may be, when one's connection to Him is predicated on human understanding, it is necessarily finite and limited.

Even Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his life was rooted in intellectual conviction.

G-d's command to Abraham to leave the country of his birth began a whole new chapter in his and the Jewish people's relationship with G-d, one which transcends human understanding.

The Jew's connection to G-d is eternal, based not on our limited intellectual faculties but on the fact that the Jewish soul is "a veritable part of G-d Himself."

A son is connected to his father not because he appreciates his qualities, but because he is a part of him.

Similarly, our connection to G-d is so deep and profound that it cannot be attained simply by our own efforts. Only G-d Himself could have created a bond of this magnitude by choosing us to serve Him.

When G-d told Abraham, "Go out of your land, out of your birthplace and from your father's house," He was commanding him to embark on a whole new level of service.

Abraham would no longer be just a human being - he and his children would henceforth be Jews, connected to G-d on the very deepest level possible.

The words "Go out of your land" marked the beginning of this supernatural connection between G-d and the Jewish people, a connection that transcends the limitations of nature.

It therefore follows that even those Jews who, for whatever reason, have had little connection to a Torah way of life need not wait until acquiring a deep intellectual understanding of Judaism to begin observing mitzvot.

On the contrary, as the Jew is already firmly connected to G-d, fulfilling His will, will serve to enhance the Jew's intellectual understanding of Torah and strengthen his eternal bond with the Creator. Adapted from *Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. XXV*

### A Song in the Head

How many times have you listened to a catchy tune and the song stayed in your head? Or you've heard someone humming or whistling or singing, and the song sticks in your mind?

The song is in your head, and you can't get it out. If you're occupied, the song disappears, or at least it seems to. But when you're least expecting it, there it is again!

And so it goes, throughout the day, the song keeps popping into your head, in different places, in different situations; sometimes it's welcome, sometimes not. But it's always there, in the back of your mind, so that even when you're not hearing it, you're thinking about it. And when you're not thinking about it, you're thinking about not thinking about it.

Even if you like it, even if it's a great song, you get to the point where there's just too much of a good thing.

What's interesting is that while pictures may also haunt our minds, they don't linger the same way a song does. We can more easily replace one image with another, in our head, than we can replace that song that keeps repeating itself with another song.

Chasidic teachings give us an insight into this phenomenon. Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of the Chabad movement, said, "Words are the pen of the heart, but music is the pen of the soul."

Here's one way to understand that profound statement: When we talk, we express ourselves. We reveal our emotions and our identity. When we write, as any writer or author will tell you, this

process of self-revelation - and self-discovery - is more intense, more personal, reaches deeper into our being and who we are. Through the written word in particular we encounter and recognize our nature, our character, our unique personality.


But music is the pen of the soul. It reaches both higher and deeper, to our very essence, to the inexpressible core of our being. Through music we become aware of that within ourselves which is both most essentially us and, paradoxically, transcends our sense of self - the limitations of time and space.

If this is true of music in general, it is more and mostly true of a niggun, the wordless, soul-revealing, soul-inspiring melodies that expresses and reveals the G-dliness within each of us. In a kind of spiritual synesthesia - a blending or transferring of sensations - a niggun gives us access to the otherwise hidden Divine Light that illuminates, and concealed Divine Life Force that animates, us all.

Ultimately, the point of our access to such high levels of Divine Light and Life, is so that we will be inspired to strengthen our commitment to Jewish living.

In fact, it is precisely this concept that the Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote about to the organizer of a "Chasidic Soul Concert;" "Indeed, the classical Chasidic niggunim [melodies] of the Chabad Rebbes have the quality of arousing the so-called 'Pintele Yid' [the Jewish spark] in the heart of every Jew, the true essence of a Jew..."

"But with all the importance of a Jewish heart and Jewish feelings ('G-d desires the heart') - the real value of an emotional experience is in seeing it translated into action in terms of actual Jewish living." ■

<b>Important Times</b>	<b>October 15 – 22</b>	Brought to you by: <b>Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace</b> <a href="http://www.chabad.org">www.chabad.org</a>	Re-printed by: <b>Chabad of Scottsdale</b> (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org
<i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am   Sunday 8:00am   Monday/Thursday 6:45am		Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	
<i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 5:45pm   Shabbos 5:25pm   Friday Oct. 22 5:30pm			<b>The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale (480) 443-5362</b>
<i>Shabbat</i> <a href="#">Chassidus Club</a> <b>8:15am</b>   <a href="#">Kabbalah of Cholent</a> <b>9:05am</b>   <a href="#">Shacharit</a> <b>9:30am</b>			
<b>Light Candles 5:37pm</b>	<b>Shabbat Ends 6:31pm</b>		

**It Once Happened** The young woman rose early. She hurriedly dressed in the half-light, making her way down the hill. Her attention was taken up by thoughts of the future. Following the sound of melodious voices, she arrived at the House of Prayer, and took up her usual position outside. It was here she came every morning, to sit upon the large rock and allow the sounds to enter her and fill her soul.

From the moment she knew there was life within her, her plan was clear. She would go every day to the House of Prayer and then to all the Houses of Study. Her child, though yet to be born, would gradually come to know the sounds of the holy words of Torah.

When asked where she was going, she would reply, "I am going to the House of Prayer, so that my baby can hear the holy words." No one could fathom her design; but to her it was perfectly clear.

On this particular cold, winter day, she sat immersed in her own prayer to the One Above to bless her child with wisdom and the ability to toil in His Torah. She sat until the scholars emerged. Shyly, she approached the first: "Please, bless my child with wisdom." The old man smiled at the young woman whose presence no longer surprised him. "May your child shine with the light of Torah," he replied. She then continued on to the various Houses of Study where she would sit beneath the open windows, the words of Torah permeating her essence.

The months passed. The young woman still made her early morning rounds, but now she was accompanied by her new son, her precious treasure.

She still visited both the Houses of Prayer and the Houses of Study, but now she propped up the small baby in his cradle which she carried from home. And from the early morning until the heat of the day had passed, the tiny baby sat, dozed, ate, and dozed again while the sacred melodies of Torah learning filled the air, enveloping him and filtering into his consciousness. The young mother was joyful with her lot and confident in the future of her small child, Yehoshua.

Rabbi Yehoshua was tired. The road to Rome was long and difficult. But, thank G-d, his mission had met with success. His nerve-racking debates with the vicious Hadrian had yielded the hoped for result-the severe decrees against the Jews had been rescinded. He could return to Yavne in peace, with good news for all his fellow Jews. Rabbi Yehoshua was enjoying his repose. Rabbi Yehoshua's thoughts turned to home. He longed to return to the Holy Land, to resume learning Torah with his beloved comrades, to enjoy the serenity of life's routines.

He was immersed in reverie when he was jolted by the appearance of a young Roman woman who stood before him with a saucy look on her face.

"So, you are Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania," she said with disdain.

"So, I am," answered Rabbi Yehoshua, for even in his humility he was aware that his fame extended to Rome. His wisdom, though, was equalled by his penetrating insight and deep-felt love for his fellowman.

"I have heard many tales recounting your wisdom," she replied. "But never would I have imagined that G-d would pick such an ugly vessel for his wisdom!"

Rabbi Yehoshua smiled at the girl's rude, but honest description of his appearance. He thought for only a moment and looked her in the eye, "Tell me, does your father have much old wine?"

"Yes, of course. We have quite extensive cellars," the girl answered.

"Well," he continued, "how does your father store the wine?"

"In clay jugs, of course."

"Can he not afford silver casks?" asked Rabbi Yehoshua, feigning surprise.

"Certainly he could, but everyone knows that wine will spoil if it is stored in silver. Clay is the proper material for preserving wine."

"Ah, now you have your answer! The Creator of the World knows the proper receptacle for his wisdom, and thus has He created me! So, if you have some complaint, you must take it to my Creator!"

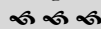
The Roman woman was both embarrassed and impressed by Rabbi Yehoshua's discourse with her. She quickly took her leave, murmuring apologies, but as for Rabbi Yehoshua, he was unperturbed by the whole encounter.

Back in Yavne, Rabbi Yehoshua felt an immense relief. Now, life's rhythms could begin anew; and to him life was synonymous with Torah. And for his great learning and his loving nature, he was loved by all whom he touched. The years accumulated greatness and honor, but Rabbi Yehoshua's aim never changed.

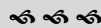
One day, already an old man, Rabbi Yehoshua sat with his students exploring a question in Jewish law. Was it incumbent upon the parents to bring their small children to hear the reading of the Torah during the Hakhel year? Rabbi Yehoshua listened to the discussion, and then related the story of how his mother would rise before dawn to sit beneath the open windows and allow her child to absorb the feel and essence of the holy words. All his life, Rabbi Yehoshua continued, he recalled his mother with blessing, for it was she who instilled in him the holiness to which his soul became attached.

Rabbi Yehoshua's comment sealed the Jewish legal conclusion with his own beautiful truth. **□**

**And he believed in G-d, and he counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6)** Not only **Thoughts that Count** did Abraham believe in G-d, but he was appreciative of G-d's kindness and generosity in giving him the intelligence to have faith. (Avodat Yisrael)



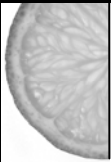
A person must overcome his natural inclinations in order to draw closer to G-d. This is alluded to in "Go out of your country" ("eret," related to the word "razon" or will; "your family" ("molad'tcha," an allusion to the intellect which "gives birth" to the emotions); and "your father's house" (the word "av," "father," related to "taava," lust and appetite). Only then can one arrive at "the land that I will show you." (Sifrei Chasidut)



**And the L-rd said to Abram, go out from your country, and from your family, and from your father's house (Gen. 12:1)**

There are some lands that produce naturally strong and robust people, but as G-d implied to Abraham, a Jew mustn't rely on his inborn strength. Nor should he content himself with the positive character attributes he inherited from his family, or with the fact that his father was holy and righteous. Rather, every Jew must "go out" and expend his own efforts, as it states in Psalms (128:2), "For you shall eat the labor of your hands; happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you."

(Daat Moshe)



SLICE OF

## LIFE

## How a Gown Becomes a Curtain

by Miri Yeshurun

It was the end of summer 2003, at the height of the bloody terrorist attacks against the Jews of Israel. One of Jerusalem's heroes was Dr. David Applebaum, head of the emergency department at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital. Originally from the U.S. Dr. Applebaum was always among the first, whenever a terrorist attack hit, to give the injured his devoted care, thereby saving scores of lives.

Dr. Applebaum had just returned from New York, where he had been invited to lecture at a major Manhattan hospital on emergency treatment of terror victims. He hurried back home for the wedding of his eldest daughter, Nava, on Wednesday, September 10. That Tuesday evening, the doctor took Nava out to the popular Cafe Hillel.

The Applebaum's were ready to leave, when someone called from home. Suddenly, a loud explosion was heard over the phone. A suicide bomber had walked into the cafe and blown himself up. David and Nava's family members tried calling them. But no one picked up their calls.

The older children in the family immediately ran over to the cafe. The scene there was chaotic so the family took a taxi to the hospital. The hospital's director saw them: "Where's David?" he asked. "We need him here!"

"I'm looking for him, too," Mrs. Devora Applebaum told him. The hospital's emergency staff quickly realized that this time their beloved head would not be among those giving aid.

Eventually Dr. Applebaum's son, head of the TRM emergency first aid clinic that his father had established, approached his mother.

## Moshiach Matters

At the end of the day on which Abraham made a special covenant with G-d, the Torah states, "And the sun came down, and Abraham fell into a deep sleep." The sun represents Moshiach, as it is written in Psalms (89:37), "And his (Moshiach's) throne is like the sun before Me." Abraham represents the Jewish people. The meaning of the verse, "And the sun came down, and Abraham fell into a deep sleep," is that the Jewish people will be in a deep spiritual slumber before Moshiach comes. Moshiach will awaken us all from this sleep. ■

(Midrash Agada in Torah Shleimah 15:127)

"Which one?" Devora asked frantically.

Between sobs, he managed to burst out: "Both, Ima, both of them!"

The double tragedy, of a bride on the eve of her wedding day, and her father, the beloved doctor who had saved so many lives, shocked the whole country. Even the international media covered the story in depth. Thousands attended the funeral, many of them total strangers. During the shiva week, multitudes visited the family to console them, while many more came just to stand outside their home and weep with them. No one could look at Nava's beautiful wedding gown.

Aviva is a close friend and relative of Devora. Her daughter was Nava's best friend, who had grown up with her and been in the same class as her all the way through school.

During the shiva, a memory floated before Aviva's eyes. Years ago, in a museum in Safed, Israel, she had seen a paroches - a curtain for a holy ark that holds sacred Torah scrolls - sewn by a woman from the bridal gown of her daughter who had been murdered in a pogrom before her wedding. Aviva recalled how she had gazed at that paroches, shocked by the very thought of a bride murdered on the eve of her wedding.

Suddenly it struck her: Why not perpetuate Nava's holy memory by converting her bridal gown into a paroches? When Aviva shared this with Devora, she embraced the idea. This, she felt, would be an appropriate symbol of Jerusalem's repeated devastation and its inhabitants' suffering over its millennia-long history.

Aviva is among the coordinators of a women's organization for preserving Rachel's Tomb (Kever Rachel). The Torah relates that Jacob buried his beloved wife Rachel outside Beit Lechem after she passed away in childbirth. Tradition tells us that Rachel was provisionally buried along the way so that she could arouse Divine compassion upon the Jews when their captors brought them on that path on their way to exile in Babylon. This is recorded by Jeremiah (31:14-15): "...Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be consoled... Thus says G-d: 'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your accomplishment... and they shall return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future... and your children will return to their border.'"

Rachel became the archetype for every Jewish mother whose compassion for her children prompts her to arouse Divine mercy on them. Jewish women have always felt close to Rachel and have flocked to her tomb to pour their hearts out to G-d, confident that Mother Rachel's merit will bring Divine compassion upon us all.

Aviva and her friends agreed that the ideal place for a paroches made out of Nava's wedding gown was at Rachel's tomb!

Needed now was a seamstress who could put her heart and soul into the craftsmanship. Aviva found Tal Levi, an expert seamstress who supports her family so that her husband can study Torah full time. Although Tal would need to put hundreds of hours into creating the paroches, she and her husband decided that she should donate her services.

Aviva approached the woman who owned the rental company to explain what they hoped to do with the bridal gown. The owner generously agreed to donate it without charge.

The graceful bridal gown became a magnificent paroches, a work of art. The paroches was finally completed and it was to be dedicated on Nava's 21st birthday, the 11th day of Adar (Thursday, March 4, 2004).

The dedication ceremony would take place at Rachel's Tomb. When the Israeli media heard about the event, they clamored to cover it. Rachel's tomb was packed for the deeply moving ceremony. The resplendent paroches, clearly transformed from a bridal gown, was hung in the approach corridor before the tomb's synagogue for all to admire. Later, Nava's brothers hung it in front of the synagogue's holy ark, and a prayer service was held. It was decided to hang it permanently in the women's section where many women pray next to it each day. ■

Reprinted with permission from the N'Shei Chabad Newsletter, translated by Rabbi Daniel Goldberg from the original Hebrew article in Mishpacha Chasidit

## Sara Finds a Mitzva

Sara Finds a Mitzva, the latest release from HaChai Publishing, is a beautifully illustrated storybook that highlights the important mitzvah (commandment) of returning lost items to their owners. When Sara finds a little toy duck abandoned on top of a mailbox, she and her grandmother embark on a search for the owner that takes them from place to place. Will Sara find her mitzva in the end? Written by Rebeka Simhaee and illustrated by Michael Weber. ■



**MEZUZAH  
DID U  
KNOW???**  
☆☆☆

The placing of a mezuzah on the doors of a home or office protects the inhabitants -- whether they are inside or outside. The Rebbe teaches that this protection is not a reward for performing the *mitzvah* but rather an immediate and essential result of its observance.

## The Rebbe Writes

2nd of Marcheshvan, 5725 [1964]

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter of the 26th of Tishrei, containing a report of the activities with the girls' groups, as well as N'shei Chabad, and the Camp, all of which I read with much interest.

May G-d grant that the attainments of the past should stimulate an increased activity and even greater results in the future, exceeding by far the plans and expectations.

As we are now reading in the Torah about Avrohom Ovinu [Abraham our Father], it is well to remember the lesson which, our Sages say, we have to learn from Abraham, namely that his actions always exceeded his words, and he always did a great deal more than he promised. It befits us, who are called the children of Abraham, to follow in his footsteps.

May G-d grant you and all your coworkers the utmost success.

With blessing,

Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5732 [1971]

*To the Participants in the Testimonial Banquet honoring Rabbi Dr. Moshe Yitzchok Hecht*

Greeting and Blessing:

I am very pleased to be informed about the forthcoming Testimonial Banquet in honor of Rabbi Hecht's twenty-five years of dedicated service to the greater New Haven community.

The occasion is a fitting testimony to the personal achievements of the recipient of this honor. It also shows that he is fortunate in having Baalei-batim [supporters] who appreciate his services to the community. Furthermore, and this is the most essential aspect, the occasion reflects recognition of the vital importance of Jewish education, the field in which Rabbi Hecht has particularly distinguished himself and made his greatest contribution.

All this gives me the confident expectation that the event will serve as a further stimulus to the cause of Chinuch [Jewish education], where there is of course still much more to be done. For, as long as there is a Jewish boy or girl who does not yet receive a Torah-true education, the obligation of the community cannot be considered fully done.

On the other hand, we live in a situation which is especially conducive to Chinuch. Parents are more keenly aware of the compelling need of Chinuch in the present days of confusion and misguided values. As for Jewish children and youth, they are always receptive to the Torah and Mitzvos [commandments]. This has again confirmed the truth of the Torah and of the Lubavitch approach, namely, that the Torah and Mitzvos are part of the Jewish essence, and that it is only necessary to help a Jew bring this essence to the fore and rediscover himself. And having been brought into the experience of Torah and Mitzvos, they are happy and grateful, and proceed to go from strength to strength on their own accord, and help others, in the manner of a chain reaction.

It is customary to make a reference to the Torah portion of the week, in which any event takes place. It is, therefore, significant that the weekly portion Lech-lecho begins with G-d's call to Abraham to leave his land and birthplace, etc., in order to begin a new life in the Promised Land.

Symbolically speaking, this is also the call and challenge to every Jew, at all times and in all places. It is the eternal call to the Jew not to allow himself to be swept by the outside environment, nor to be swayed by inborn temptations, or acquired habits, or common daily routine. A Jew must rise above all this and follow the Divine call to go "To the land which I (G-d) will show you" - the Jewish way of life, which G-d prescribed for Abraham, the first Jew and for our Jewish people as a whole at Mt. Sinai. Moreover, G-d promises that this way of life, far from being impossible, as some mistakenly think, is within reach of every Jew and it is the source of blessing for himself and the society in which he lives, as G-d further promised, "And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

I send my prayerful wishes that the enthusiasm and dedication of all participants in this Banquet will inspire also others to a concerted and ever-growing effort on behalf of Torah-true education, both for the young as well as for the old who are still young in Jewish knowledge and experience. May G-d bless you with Hatzlocho [success] and true Nachas [pleasure] from your children, and fulfill your hearts' desires for good materially and spiritually. ■

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman

We are now in the month of Marcheshvan, the eighth month on the Jewish calendar. After the incredibly intense spiritual experience of the High Holy Days - Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah - we are commanded to imbue the "regular" days of the year with the same spiritual energy, in order to elevate them to a higher level. By sanctifying even the most mundane aspects of our daily lives, we bring Moshiach's arrival closer and closer.

Indeed, Marcheshvan is the time when we begin to fulfill our Divine mission of "And Jacob went on his way." Jacob is symbolic of every Jew. In Marcheshvan, we must all strive to utilize the spiritual strength we acquired during the previous month of Tishrei. As the weather changes and the temperature drops outside, the lack of physical warmth should remind us of the need to "turn up the thermostat" in the spiritual sense. Emulating our forefather Jacob, who left his father's house and traveled on his own, we should all strive for spiritual growth regardless of the warmth or hospitality of our surroundings.

Every month of the year corresponds to a different one of the Twelve Tribes, Marcheshvan corresponding to the tribe of Menashe. Menashe was the firstborn son of Joseph, who gave him that name as a reminder to remember his Jewish identity. ("For G-d, said he, has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.") After the powerful holiday period of Tishrei, a Jew might find himself in a spiritual vacuum. Especially during Marcheshvan, we must always be aware of our roots and try to avoid negative influences.

When the letters of the name Menashe are rearranged, they spell the word "neshama," soul. For when a Jew is in touch with his neshama, he will never forget his Father in Heaven. ■

## What's In A Name?

**EZRA** means help." As related in the book of Nehemiah (12:1), Ezra the Scribe led over 2000 Jews back from Babylonia to the Land of Israel. He was at the forefront of the Jewish renaissance which culminated in the building of the second Holy Temple.

**EFRAT** means "honored, distinguished." Efrat was the wife of Caleb ben Chetzron (I Chronicles 2:19). Efrat is also the site where the matriarch Rachel died and was buried; it is another name for Bethlehem.