

L'Chaim

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Weekly Publication
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November 26, 2010 – 19 Kislev, 5771

1147: VAYESHEV

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Living with the REBBE



At first glance, this week's Torah portion, Vayeshev, chronicles the circumstances leading to Joseph's appointment as second in command over Egypt, subordinate only to Pharaoh. Yet, upon examination, we find that Joseph's story is synonymous with the history of the Jews.

Joseph, the pride of his father, at the age of 17 is suddenly plucked from his secure environment, family, and his country. Sold into slavery and finding himself in a foreign land, he must now cope with the most adverse and cruel of circumstances. Worst of all, Joseph is not to blame, for all this has come about through no action of his own.

A lesser individual would have surely succumbed to bitterness and depression. Another might have become indifferent. But Joseph realized that he must deal with the reality that presented itself. As the servant of Potifar, he fulfilled his duties to the best of his ability. It soon became apparent even to Potifar that only by Joseph's merit did his household enjoy its material blessings.

This, then, is the task of every Jew: No matter how adverse the circumstances, each Jew must live up to his full potential and fulfill his duties to the best of his ability.

But how was Joseph repaid for his loyalty? He was thrown into prison! Why? Because he refused to betray his master by succumbing to the advances of the master's wife. Not only didn't Joseph's honesty and integrity bring him any positive benefits, these very qualities caused him to be incarcerated. Was Joseph discouraged? Did he reject his lifestyle and renounce his high standards? Joseph's response to adversity was to continue in the same path, acting honestly and in good faith. Eventually his behavior and virtue drew the attention of his jailers.

This is the history of the Jew as well: No matter how depraved and corrupt his surroundings, he remains undeterred from his faith in G-d and His Torah.

When Joseph noticed that two of his fellow inmates, Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, were distressed for some reason, he rushed to their aid, without thought of rejoicing at their misfortune or of taking revenge for the role they played in his downfall. Joseph could not bear to see people in need, and so he immediately offered his assistance. He was able to bring them relief by interpreting their respective dreams.

In return, Joseph did not ask for monetary payment or special treatment. He merely requested that the chief butler mention his name to Pharaoh when he was freed, which he didn't do. In his unbending faith in the goodness of man and in ultimate justice, Joseph believed that fairness would prevail if only Pharaoh was presented with the facts.

This theme has been played out time and again in Jewish history. Joseph unfortunately learned the hard way that this world is full of lies and deception. Yet when he later found himself in a position of almost unlimited power, he refused to exact revenge on those who had harmed him. This is not the way of the Jew. Joseph faithfully used his office to steer the Egyptians and the whole world from potential catastrophe during the years of famine, enacting, for the first time, the historic role the Jews have played during their exile among the nations. ■

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Shlopping for Chanuka?

The approach of Chanuka has many people shlepping and shopping (shlopping for short) around the malls for gifts.

Even if you're sitting at home in a comfortable chair with your feet up and a cup of tea in hand, perusing a catalogue or surfing the net for great gift ideas, it can still be a shlep to shop for Chanuka!

Whether you're driving around looking for a parking space or checking out the bargains in cyberspace, shlopping can take hours upon hours and can be very tiring.

Shlopping is especially draining, confusing and exhausting with all that goes on in the malls at this time of the year during the end of the shlopping days countdown.

Actually, shlopping malls may be the most inappropriate place to find the most appropriate Chanuka gift. The seasonal decorations, the rush and hassle, the here-today-gone-tomorrow trendiness of items ornately displayed in store windows, can detract from the Chanuka spirit.

Chanuka celebrates the triumph of the little cruse of purity over crass materialism. The Maccabees fought and were victorious in a battle of quality over quantity. They dedicated themselves to preserving Jewish identity and to resisting alien influences.

We can shop and shop, but not

all that glitters is gold. A true Chanuka gift should have some inner content, not only superficial wrappings, fancy labels and pricey tags. Our family and friends certainly deserve more on Chanuka than just shlopping bags full of gizmos.

But can anyone hear us above all the noise? How can we focus on the true meaning of Chanuka amid all the surrounding sights and sounds, muzak and color?

The following proposed announcement may sound a little shloppy, but let's try to get someone's attention with it.

"Attention Shoppers! We draw your attention to a special in the Chanuka department.

"Remember: It's the thought that counts. Give something with meaning.

"Gone are the days when the only Jewish toy was a wobbly lead dreidle. We've come a long way.

"Experience the explosion of Jewish creativity. Go into your local Judaica store (or visit them online) and choose from a large and attractive selection of Jewish games, toys, art & crafts, books, tapes, software and CDs, with real, authentic Jewish content.

"Our rich and exciting heritage can come alive for Jewish kids of all ages. Give gifts that are educational and entertaining - the best of both worlds."

Shlep a friend along with you on this new Chanuka shlopping adventure. ■

Rabbi Yisrael Rubin is director of Chabad of the Capital District, Albany, NY

**MEZUZAH
DID YOU
KNOW???**

Written on a mezuzah scroll is the Shema, a passage from G-d's holy Torah. Furthermore, the presence of mezuzah in a doorway is itself a mitzvah.

Did you know that it is forbidden to sweep trash or dirt from one room to another, passing through the doorway with a mezuzah on it? ■

**A WORD FROM
THE DIRECTOR**

Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman

Happy New Year! Yes, Rosh Hashana was a few months ago, but this Tuesday we'll be celebrating a different New Year: Yud Tes Kislev, the Rosh Hashana of Chasidut.

Yud Tes (19) Kislev is the anniversary of the release from prison of the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, known as the Alter Rebbe. Because the entire future of Chasidut was at stake, his liberation was not only a personal redemption, but the redemption of the entire movement.

Nothing happens down here in this world without a spiritual counterpart. In fact, the reason things happen in this world is because of what is going on "up above" in the higher celestial spheres. When the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison it was a vindication of his teachings - and a "green light" from Above to continue their dissemination full speed ahead.

The underlying purpose of Chasidut is to prepare the world for the Messianic era, when the knowledge of G-d will be commonplace. Maimonides explains that King Moshiach "will restore the entire world to serve G-d together, as it states, 'For then I will transform the nations...that they all call in the Name of G-d.'"

This point - that Moshiach is for everyone, Jew and Gentile - was emphasized in a letter the Alter Rebbe sent to the famous Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev upon his release. Rather than stressing the joy that was felt over the liberation of Chasidut from its bondage, the Alter Rebbe wrote that "G-d's Name was made great and publicly sanctified, particularly in the eyes of the officials...who also considered it a great wonder...and declared, 'It is from G-d that such a thing has happened.'"

May the holy day of Yud Tet Kislev, the preparatory redemption of Chasidut, lead to the ultimate Redemption of all mankind with the coming of Moshiach immediately. ■

The Rebbe Writes

20 Kislev, 5719 (1959)

Yesterday we celebrated Yud Tes [19] Kislev, the Redemption of the Alter Rebbe [Rabbi Shneur Zalman], the founder of Chabad, and together with him the triumph of all matters connected with Chabad.

The day inspires every one of us to greater efforts in living up to the concepts of Chabad, the basis of which is the love of G-d, love of the Torah, and love of our fellow-Jews, all of which is truly one.

This is connected with the basic teachings of Chabad, requiring everyone of us to do our utmost to bring our fellow-Jews closer to G-d and to Torah and mitzvos [commandments], in their purest form, without compromise or concession, though the approach to each individual may differ in accordance with his spiritual state and background.

One cannot expect a Jew who has drifted from the Jewish way of life to transform himself suddenly, and it is necessary to bring him closer to G-d by stages, yet we have to present to him the true aspects of our Torah and mitzvos, not in any diluted form.

It is only then that the Jew is responsive to the truth, as is expressed the well-known saying of the Alter Rebbe that "No Jew wishes, nor can he, sever himself from G-d."

The 19th of Kislev, therefore, reminds us every year of these basic principles, and inspires us towards their fulfillment.

I know your late father of blessed memory, and I also had the opportunity to meet with you and your wife when you visited here.

My personal knowledge of the members of your family gives me every confidence that every one of you will do your utmost to work for the spreading of Torah and mitzvos in your community, in the spirit of the founder of Chabad, and his teachings.

The work of Chabad in every field of Jewish endeavor has always been on a non-sectarian basis and not confined to any particular group, but embraces all our fellow Jews.

It is because of this that it has remained free from outside influences and pressures, and it is because of this that it has succeeded so well, with the help of G-d.

Translated from a telegram of the Rebbe

17 Kislev, 5752 (1991)

To all those participating in the major gatherings of Yud Tes Kislev, L'Chaim, L'Chaim Velivracha - "To life, to life and blessing."

Beginning today, the 17th of Kislev (whose numerical equivalent in Hebrew, tov, means "good"); continuing on the 18th of Kislev (whose numerical equivalent in Hebrew, chai, means "live"); and on the 19th of the month, Yud Tes Kislev itself; may you be inscribed - and may that inscription be sealed - for a good year in the study of Chasidut and in the Chasidic ways of conduct.

May it be G-d's will that the verse, "He redeemed my soul in peace" [the verse of Psalms which the Alter Rebbe was reciting when he was informed of his release] come to complete fruition for each and every one of you.

May you succeed in making vessels for this blessing, as reflected in our Sages' interpretation of the above verse as refer-ring to one who is occupied in Torah study (both the revealed dimension of Torah law and the Torah's mystic dimension), in deeds of kindness, and in prayer.

Additional emphasis on the above is granted this year, for Yud Tes Kislev falls on a Tuesday, the day on which the expression "And G-d saw that it was good" was repeated. And as our Sages explain, this refers to a two-fold good, "Good for the heavens" and "Good for the created beings."

The above activities should all be brought to fruition energetically, in a manner of Ufaratzta: "And you shall spread forth westward, eastward, north-ward, and southward," beginning with each of the mitzva campaigns.

There is added emphasis on all of the above in the present year, for it is a leap year, which the Torah describes as a "perfect year"....

And from these days, we will proceed to the days of preparation for Chanuka and to Chanuka itself, whose message is, which indeed, grants the potential for it to be actualized, for each and every person to kindle "the lamp of mitzva and the light of Torah," "at the outside of the entrance to his home," and to increase the light shining at the entrance to his home from day to day, causing it to shine outward throughout the entire year...

May this be realized in the building of the Third Holy Temple - speedily in our days, in the true and complete Redemption led by Moshiach. May this take place in the immediate future. ■



SLICE OF LIFE

The Song of Chanuka

by Svetlana Weissman

Let me share with you my story about the small cruse of oil that has remained pure though hidden in Jewish hearts in the former Soviet Union despite 70 years of communism and oppression.

Our family is typically Russian. My grandparents moved from Poland to the Kuban region of Southern Russia since 1953. My grandparents were devoted communists and they raised my mother to be faithful to communist doctrines as well. My grandmother Larissa Michaelovna was the one who actually educated me, as well, since my mother Olga passed away when I turned none.

Grandmother just allowed Russian to be spoken at home. In fact, she was known as the best Russian language teacher in our town. She never spoke about her past. We only knew that she was from Poland. The only time I ever heard Polish was when she would take out her violin and play some old, Polish melodies. At those times, Grandmother would cry and laugh at the same time. She would gaze up high as if she were in some distant place far, far way, with tears rolling down her cheeks. I would say, "Babushka," over and over again, asking, "Why are you crying?" She would just smile and kiss me the way only Babushka could.

My birthday was in the middle of December, and my grandmother would always celebrate by taking out her violin and playing a Polish song that she said reminded her of me. "Oy chanuka, oy chanuka, a yontif, a sheina." I didn't understand the Polish words of the song but Grandmother would always look at me as she played and sang, and I knew that it must mean something very wonderful.

Around the time of my birthday in 2001, something happened that changed our lives forever. It was the middle of the winter when

she came home with a young look on her face. Even though she was already 78-year-old she looked 20 years younger. I will always remember the look of delight and contentment in my grandmother's eyes when she showed me her shopping bag filled to overflowing. I never saw my grandmother come home with so much food at once. It was around 10-12 kilos of flour, oil, canned vegetables, dried fruit and candy I never saw in our stores.

I was in shock. I knew that on her 3,850 rubles pension she could not possibly afford to buy all at that at once. My grandmother saw my curious look and told me the following.

"Svetochka, my child, we are Jews. Your real name is Sheine. I asked your mother to give you that name in memory of my mother Sheine who was murdered with my entire family in Auschwitz in 1944. I am not Larisa, I am Leahle. I am not Polish, I am Jewish. You see this tattoo on my arm? It's not just a number; it's my identity. I promised myself after the War that I would forget my past, and start a new life with no oppression. I didn't want your mother and future generations to suffer anymore. I was angry with G-d and I didn't want Him to be a part of my life. My 'religion' became communism.

"But that all changed a week ago. It was when I was taking my regular daily stroll in the park. I heard music. It was the song that I play on my violin for your birthday. My feet had a mind of their own and I began walking toward the music. Right there, in the park in Krasnodar, Russia, I saw them. It was the boys I last saw 60 years ago. They reminded me of my brothers and cousins. They were dancing to the music that came from their car and they were stopping people, asking them questions, and then giving them something.

"One of them came over to me and asked: "Izvinti, vi Evreika?" (Excuse me, are you Jewish?) I couldn't answer. Tears began rolling down my cheeks. I could only nod my head "yes." He gave me a box, with a tin candle holder. Look, here it is. It is called a menorah. And he gave me candles and a volchok (dreidel).

"The package had a leaflet with holiday instructions and contact information. It took me several days before I actually called the number. and Then I was invited to be introduced to Rabbi Shneur Segal, the director of the Krasnodar Jewish Community Center and a Chabad rabbi. He spoke to me in Yiddish. It's been 60 years since I've spoken Yiddish. He asked if he could give me a Chanuka package. It was this bag full of goodies. I declined. I said other people might need and deserve it more than me. But he was insistent. I want you to meet him Sheine. He invited us to the Chanuka celebration at the JCC... I want you to meet him, Sheine.

As they say, the rest is history. We went to the Chanuka celebration at the JCC. And we started going there for Shabbat and during the week for classes and events. The most difficult part for Babushka was when I went to study in the Machon Chamesh Jewish Institute in Moscow. But she encouraged me to go there. "You must be a living legacy for our family. Go, learn to really be a Jew," she blessed me.

Each year that I was away in Moscow I would make sure to be at my babushka's for my birthday. She would take out her violin and play our special song. But from that Chanuka on, I knew what the words meant. "Oy Chanuka, oy Chanuka, a Yontif, a sheine..." "■"

Sheina Weissman, a social worker, lives in Rishon L'Tzion, Israel, with her husband Meir and daughter Rachel. The Krasnodar JCC is a member of the Federation of Jewish Communities of CIS and Baltic States, the umbrella organization for JCCs in 454 cities across the former Soviet Union. They provide religious, cultural, educational and humanitarian aid to Jews throughout the FSU.

What's In A Name?

Zmira is from the Hebrew meaning "song" or "melody."

Zevulun means "to exalt" or "to honor." Zevulun was the sixth son of Jacob and Leah. A partnership was set up between Zevulun and his brother, Yisachar. The tribe of Yisachar were full-time students of Torah while the Zevulunites, who were merchants, provided them with financial support. This relationship continues today, as exemplified by business people who support Torah study.

Moshiach Matters

The nineteenth of Kislev - the "Rosh Hashana" of Chasidut - is associated with the coming of Moshiach, for it is through the spreading of the wellsprings of Chasidic teachings outward that Moshiach will come. With Moshiach's coming, there will be the revelation of "the [new dimensions of the] Torah which will emerge from Me," the revelation of the mystic secrets of the Torah. ■

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 16 Kislev, 5752-1991)

News

See You There!

Be part of the Chanuka celebrations at the World's Largest Chanuka Menora at Fifth Ave. and 59th St. in NYC. Wednesday, Dec. 1 and Thursday, Dec. 2, the menora will be lit at 5:30 p.m. Fri, Dec. 3, the menora will be lit at 3:40 p.m. Saturday night, Dec. 4, menora lighting will be at 8:00 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 5 - Wed, Dec. 8, the menora will be lit at 5:30 p.m. On Sunday there will be live music, free hot latkes and chocolate Chanuka gelt. For more info call the Lubavitch Youth Organization at (718) 778-6000. For public menora lightings in your area call your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center. ■

Important Times	November 26 – December 3	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace www.chabad.org	Re-printed by: Chabad of Scottsdale (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org
<i>Shacharis</i> 6:45am Sunday 8:00am Tuesday 7:00am		Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	
<i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 5:15pm Shabbos 4:50pm			The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362
<i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club</u> 8:15am <u>Kabbalah of Cholent</u> 9:05am Shacharis 9:30am			
Light Candles 5:02pm	Shabbat Ends 6:00pm		

It Once Happened Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, believed strongly that the doctrines of Chasidism, based on and interwoven with the Kabala, ought not to be publicized except to a select few. He was especially opposed to the practice of the disciples of his colleague, the Maggid of Mezritch, who committed the Maggid's teaching to writing and circulated their manuscripts for copying by others.

Rabbi Pinchas' anger and criticism were aggravated one day when on a visit to Mezritch, he found one of these manuscripts lying in the gutter. To Rabbi Pinchas, his worst suspicions appeared confirmed. He was notably upset and this incident could very well have led to a serious rift between himself and the Maggid, the leader of the Chasidic movement after the Baal Shem Tov's passing.

The situation was saved by the quick intervention of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. He approached Rabbi Pinchas to appease him by relating the following parable:

"Once there was a great and powerful king who had but a single son. The king wished to see his son excel in wisdom and strength and sent him to many distant places to be trained in all the arts and sciences. One day a letter came informing the king that while on some far-off island the prince had fallen ill with a very dangerous disease which perplexed his doctors. Immediately the king gathered the greatest medical experts to find a cure, but to no avail. Anxiety, fear and frustration filled all in the kingdom, until one day a man appeared and said that he knew of an effective medicine. The alleged elixir, however, consisted of a unique and most precious stone ground into a fine powder which had to be mixed with a liquid and then fed to the patient. After a thorough search the king's servants could find but one stone of the type prescribed: It was none other than the central and most precious jewel adorning the principal royal crown.

"The joy at finding this jewel was soon tempered by the great dilemma: The removal of the stone might cure the prince, but it would dim the very symbol of the royal majesty. To the king, however, nothing mattered as much as a cure for his only son and he ordered that the jewel be removed and pounded into powder. In the meantime, however, the latest medical bulletins reported that the patient's condition had deteriorated severely to the point that he was unable to take in even liquids. His mouth could hardly be opened. In view of this development the king's advisors thought it useless and senseless to destroy the precious stone and with it the crown's glory. But the king insisted that they proceed, arguing that the slightest chance of getting a single drop of the elixir into the patient's mouth was worth the destruction of the inestimable stone.

"The advisors retorted, "For as long as your son was able to take in food and drink we agreed with you. Indeed, nothing would have been too precious to save his life, but now his condition has worsened this much and it is most doubtful, in fact unlikely, that he will be able to take in anything. Surely it is not right to destroy the very diadem of the kingdom.

"But the king replied, "If, Heaven forbid, my son should not live, what use do I have for the crown? Alternatively, if my son survives, surely that shall be my greatest glory - the life of an only child who exposed himself to dangers in order to obey his father's wish and excel in wisdom and strength."

Rabbi Pinchas nodded his head in approval. He understood the analogy, how sometimes even the diadem of the kingdom must serve as a means towards a higher end. The King's son, the people of Israel, were in dire need of that most precious life-giving elixir of Chasidism. With a smile he conceded, "You are right. Your words are an effective defense for the propagation of Chasidic teachings."

Upon hearing of this incident, the Maggid personally praised Rabbi Shneur Zalman, adding, "With your words, you saved me." □

What profit will it be if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? (Gen. 37:26)

The fact that we will be forced to conceal our deed indicates that it is wrong. "Wherever secrecy exists - thievery exists."

(Rabbi M. Mendel of Kotzk)

We were binding sheaves in the field...and behold, your sheaves placed themselves round about, and bowed down to my sheaf (Gen. 37:7)

This world, in which physical objects appear to be distinct and separate entities from G-dliness, is likened to a field. To make a sheaf, the stalks of wheat must first be uprooted and then bound together. Similarly, the task of the Jew is to take physical objects, "uproot" them from their corporeality, and utilize them in the service of G-d so that they become vessels for holiness.

(Likutei Sichot)

Reuven returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit (Gen. 37:29)

Reuven's absence allowed the other brothers to sell Joseph; had Reuven been present, he would not have permitted them to do it. And where was he? Rashi says Reuven was preoccupied with fasting and perfecting himself. Because he was concerned only with himself, Joseph was sold and the whole series of events was set in motion that would lead to our forefathers' exile in Egypt. An important lesson is learned: One must not be concerned solely with his own perfection to the exclusion of others. We must always have our fellow Jew in mind and truly love him, lest he be ignored in his time of need.

(Likutei Sichot)

And on the vine were three branches (Gen. 40:10) According to our Sages, the Jews are likened to the vine, the fruit of which "gladdens G-d and man." For within every Jew exists this attribute of "wine" - the innate ability to delight in G-dliness, an inheritance from our forefathers. This love for G-d is hidden deep inside, much like the wine is hidden in the grape and not outwardly discernable. Likewise, just as squeezing the grape releases the treasure within, so does personal refinement and self-nullification reveal this inner love and bring it to its potential.

(Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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