

L'Chaim

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January 21, 2011 – 16 Shevat, 5771

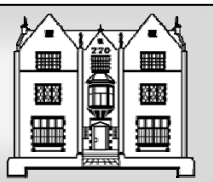
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Living with the REBBE



As we read in this week's Torah portion, Yitro, just prior to the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai G-d commanded Moses: "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob, and tell to the Children of Israel." The Midrash explains that the "House of Jacob" refers to the Jewish women. Moreover, the command to "tell" the men implies harsh speech, whereas the command to "say" to the women connotes a gentler manner of imparting information.

This is not the only difference in the way Moses was commanded to transmit the Torah to the women and to the men. In fact, Moses was instructed to communicate the "general principles" to the women, whereas the men were to receive the "laws in detail."

At first glance, this seems to imply a diminution of the value of Jewish women, as if the assumption is that they will not understand the minutiae of Jewish law. However, an in-depth analysis of the Midrash reveals something quite different:

"General principles" does not mean simple or nominal matters. On the contrary, it implies essential fundamentals and rules. In other words, G-d commanded Moses to transmit to the Jewish women the basic foundations of the Torah, from which all the smaller details he was to convey to the men are derived.

"General principles" is thus synonymous with the Torah's very essence. Similarly, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, the first two contained the "general principles" of the other eight. ("I am the L-rd your G-d" is the source of the Torah's 248 positive commandments; "You shall not have any other gods" is the source of its 365 prohibitions.)

Seen from this perspective, the Jewish women received the quintessence of the Torah, whereas the men "only" received its laws and ordinances, which obviously represent a lower level. The Torah is thus emphasizing a certain advantage women have over men.

In truth, the qualities of simple faith and awe of G-d are more openly revealed and manifested in women. G-d created women in such a way that their intellect does not override or control their personalities - who they really are - nor can it weaken their basic faith in G-d. Women are therefore more closely connected to the Torah's essence, which is why being Jewish is determined by the mother and not the father. (A person whose mother is Jewish is Jewish; a person whose mother is not Jewish is not Jewish, even if his father is.)

This also relates to the Final Redemption: In the same way the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of the righteous Jewish women, so too will Moshiach come in the merit of the righteous women of our generation, may it happen immediately. ■

Adapted from Volume 31 of Likutei Sichot

Be The Judge

One of the people who had come to comfort the Lubavitcher Rebbe as he sat shiva for his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, of blessed memory, said,

"The Rebbetzin was truly a tzadekes [righteous woman]."

"Only G-d knows her true righteousness," the Rebbe responded.

Only G-d knows a person's true motives, inner thoughts, hidden deeds. We therefore have no scale by which to judge others - nor should we. If this is true when we are judging someone meritoriously, all the more so if we find ourselves judging another person harshly or negatively.

Jewish teachings are replete with helpful hints on how to judge others favorably, if at all.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides (the "Rambam") instructs us that, "The reckoning of sins and merits is not calculated on the basis of the mere number of merits and sins, but on the basis of their magnitude as well. Some solitary merits can outweigh many sins. The weighing of sins and merits can be carried out only according to the wisdom of the All-Knowing G-d: He alone knows how to measure merits against sins." Remembering this instruction helps us cultivate a less judgmental attitude.

Another thought to keep in mind: The way we judge another person is the way we will be judged in the Heavenly Court. If we always look for something positive in another person, or try

to find a merit in even a seemingly negative act, or simply refuse to judge the situation or person because we do not or cannot know all of the factors, G-d will repay us in kind.

According to the Baal Shem Tov, when we see a fault in another person it is merely a reflection of - to a greater or lesser degree - a similar fault within ourselves. Every time we find fault in others we should look inside ourselves to see how that same failing is manifest within us. If you do this for a little while, you'll soon stop noticing other's faults, or else you will constantly be confronted with your own faults as well!

Our Sages enjoin us to judge every person favorably since we can't possibly know their hidden actions or secret good deeds. Stories from the past abound: there is the village "miser" whose passing reveals that he was a generous philanthropist; or the boorish shoemaker who seemingly could not even read, but was, in truth, a scholar and a hidden tzadik.

In addition, the Mishna teaches, "Do not judge your friend until you come to his place." The only way to really approach another person's place is first to leave your own place - your thoughts, conditioning, life-experience. Is it worth going through all that just to judge somebody else?

It is an art to always be able to find the good in another person. It often takes time to acquire such skills, but ultimately the hard work is well worth it. ■

MEZUZAH DID YOU KNOW???



The checking of mezuzahs has been revolutionized by technological developments over the last several years. Mezuzahs can now be scanned by a computer for textual errors. Since no sofer, however diligent, is infallible, computer scanning has the advantage that no word or letter will ever be overlooked.

Utilization of the computer scanning method has brought serious instances of fraud to light. In one instance, for example, the system identified several mezuzahs as being exactly identical. This is impossible with handwritten parchments. Investigation revealed that the source was merely reproducing mezuzahs on parchment using a raised-ink printing process. In another instance, the system called attention to the fact that previously scanned mezuzahs with missing words or letters had been resubmitted with those errors corrected. Such a mezuzah is invalid, as it was written "out of order."

For this reason, in addition to having the mezuzah checked by a scribe, ask the scribe if he has the option to check it also via scanning the mezuzah into the computer. ■

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This week we commemorate the *yahrzeit* of our beloved Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, wife of the Rebbe.

It is with tremendous gratitude that I look back on the times my family had the privilege of meeting with the Rebbetzin. I would like to share with you the thoughts of one of our daughters, written soon after the Rebbetzin's passing:

"My family and I were privileged to meet the Rebbetzin on four separate occasions. We cherish each moment spent with her as a priceless treasure. I remember walking into her home and thinking it resembled a palace. And there, at the head of the table, stood the queen.

"We stood at attention, not daring to breathe. She must have sensed our discomfort, for she smiled a warm, beautiful smile, and with her gentle sense of humor invited us to sit down. It was as though she was being honored to have us!

"In her own special way, the Rebbetzin gave me more than anyone else in the world. The moments spent with her are irreplaceable. She showed a sincere interest in each of us, asking us what grade we were in and what we were learning in school.

"She spoke softly and personally, making each of us feel as though no one else in the room existed except the Rebbetzin and the person to whom she was speaking.

"I remember when my father called the Rebbetzin to tell her of the passing of his father, my grandfather (of blessed memory). After expressing her deepest sympathy, she suddenly asked, 'And how is your lovely daughter?' To the Rebbetzin, we were all lovely, all special, all unique. I was just one of her many lovely daughters."

Certainly the Rebbetzin continues, in an even stronger way now, to help actualize the goal of the Rebbe's life work - to bring G-dliness into this world in a real, tangible way, through the revelation of Moshiach. We pray that very soon we will be reunited with the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin in the long-awaited Redemption. ■

The Rebbe Writes

18th of Teveth, 5716 [1956]

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter of Rosh Chodesh Teveth. I have been waiting for this kind of letter for a long time, and I am glad to note that you are now using your ability and qualifications with which you have been endowed, to exercise a good influence in your environment, especially among the women. I truth that you are also making an effort to spread the teaching of Chassidus [Chasidic teachings] in particular. And since you started in this direction, I truth you will continue in accordance with a saying of our Sages, that "sacred things should be on the ascent," and so also Chanukah teaches us to increase the lights every day.

With regard to the doubt that you express as to whether the women are prepared at this time to be organized into a Chabad women's group, if there is a possibility that such a step at this time is premature and might hinder the development of your work, it should be postponed. The main thing is to imbue them with these teachings, and to prepare them for greater things, and this is certainly something that can be done immediately in a suitable way. It is especially important to clear up to them many prevalent misunderstandings about the teachings and way of life of Chabad, which are unfortunately often misunderstood and misrepresented through ignorance.

May G-d help you to carry on your good work in contentment and peace of mind, which will help clear up many other personal problems, especially as this kind of work is bound to bring you G-d's Blessings in a generous measure.

With the Blessing to hear good news from you concerning all above,

P.S. I am gratified to read in your letter that you can at last understand the problems besetting you, though not always able to solve them. But it is well-known that the understanding of a problem is in itself already half a solution, especially where the problems are such that their solutions lie in your own hands.

19th of Tammuz, 5727 [1967]

Greeting and Blessing:

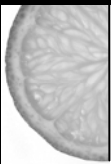
In reply to your letter of the 15th of Tammuz, in which you write about the difficulties you are encountering in realizing your desire to advance in Judaism by learning Torah, *Toras Chaim* [the guide to life], in a Yeshiva.

Inasmuch as to learn the Torah and to live a life of Torah, as is expected of every Jew, is a matter of vital importance, as the term *Toras Chaim*, mentioned above, implies, since it is indeed "our life, and the length of our days," including also our life in this world - it is clear that you ought to do everything possible to order your life accordingly. To accomplish this it is, I am certain, essential to learn in a Yeshiva. In the course of time, I am quite confident, your parents will also be satisfied and happy about this, although for the moment they do not seem to be in favor of it, as you write.

Needless to say, it is a *Mitzvo* [commandment] to honor one's father and mother, but it is in no conflict with the above. On the contrary, when your parents will see that you are sincere and meticulous in observing not only the other *Mitzvoth*, but also the *Mitzvo* of honoring your parents, they will realize that if at times you are unable to fulfill their wish, it is not because of lack of respect, but because G-d's authority takes precedence. This will eventually also have a good effect on them to encourage them in the same direction.

If you will let me know your full Hebrew name, together with your mother's Hebrew name, as is customary in such a case, I will remember you in prayer for the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good.

With blessing, ■



SLICE OF LIFE

The Rebbetzin's Legacy

by Yehudis Cohen

What do a kindergarten in Costa Rica, a library in Washington, a mikva in France, a women's university in Moscow, a Brooklyn girls' school with 1,000 students, a hospitality center at the Mayo Clinic, and this L'Chaim publication all have in common? These and hundreds of other institutions were established and named in memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (Moussia) Schneerson, whose passing we commemorate with this issue.

There are also thousands, yes literally thousands of girls who throughout the past 23 years, have been named for Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Dozens of them are now young married women, who together with their husbands, are running Chabad Houses around the world. I spoke to three of these young shlichos (emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe) about why they want to be "on shlichus" and what they find particularly special about the community with which they are working.

What is shlichus? Dedicating one's life to promoting Judaism and to inspiring Jews to reconnect to their source according to the vision of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. This is done by becoming part of the fabric of the local Jewish community and learning about their unique needs, whether in some remote location or as part of a more established Jewish community.

Moussia Goldstein and her husband Chaim, have just moved to Philadelphia to establish a new Chabad House at Drexel University.

"I always wanted to go on shlichus. I grew up on shlichus. I loved ever single second of it. I loved interacting with all different kinds of people as guests in our home and our Chabad House." Moussia's parents Rabbi Yisrael and Chana Greenberg, founded and direct Chabad of El Paso.

"All the years that I was in school in El Paso, I was always aware that I was 'the rabbi's daughter.' My friends and peers would tell me that they learned things from me without me even realizing that I was teaching them, just by me living the

way I was supposed to live as a chasid of the Lubavitcher Rebbe."

Moussia says that she believes shlichus is a great atmosphere to raise children in as one lives in a very giving and open environment. "I want to give this to my children."

Although Moussia grew up in a community-oriented Chabad House, she and her husband have chosen to become shlichim on a college campus. "I have relatives who are on campus and my husband's family is on campus. Chaim's parents, Rabbi Aharon and Esther Goldstein, and brother Alter and Chanchi Goldstein, run Chabad at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I have seen the effect that campus shlichim have on the college students. Young people who were peripherally involved with Chabad in El Paso and went off to college, looked for Chabad. As independent adults they had their own space to become what they wanted and Chabad on campus had a big effect and impacted their lives."

Chaya Mushka Freedman and her husband Yossi moved this past fall to Cleveland, Ohio, to establish a presence in the downtown Cleveland area. "I was born on shlichus (Chaya Mushka's parents Rabbi Moshe and Chana Wilansky founded and direct Chabad-Lubavitch of Maine), so naturally as I child I envisioned that one day I would do the same! And of course," she adds, "this is a very special way to connect with the Rebbe, by fulfilling his directives."

Chaya Mushka notes that living in Cleveland, with a Jewish population of over 80,000, is very different from where she grew up in Portland with 900 Jewish families.

"There are many Jews who work downtown. We are here to make everything accessible to them, from mezuzas to adult education to help with a minyan for kaddish as well as kosher food." We want to empower the Jewish commuters to bring a burst of Judaism back with them into their homes once they leave the office," she says. "Also, people have recently started moving back downtown and our goal is to be here for them as the downtown Jewish community continues to grow."

Yossi also grew up on shlichus in a small city in South America. His great-grandparents and grandparents are shlichim in Cleveland, so, as Chaya Mushka explains, "Yossi knows a lot of people here and we have a tremendous network of support."

Although Chaya Mushka says, "I never imagined myself going to a downtown area, more a small community type place like where I grew up," with youthful enthusiasm and a pioneering spirit she's ready to bring the warmth and light of Chasidic teachings to the downtown area.

Unlike the two other young women I spoke to, Chaya Matusof grew up in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, just a few blocks from 770, World Lubavitch Headquarters. Her husband, Arele, was also born and raised in Crown Heights.

"Although I grew up in the Lubavitch community of Crown Heights, I had many opportunities to see what an impact shlichim have. Through working in Gan Israel summer camps, volunteering at Chabad Houses in the New York metro area, and a special program that Beth Rivkah High School has for seniors to go to shlichim for Shabbat to see them 'in action' and help out, I knew I wanted to be a part of this. I also grew up knowing that this is something that the Rebbe really wants his Chasidim to do."

Chaya and her husband are the youth directors for Chabad of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada. Their activities include Friendship Circle, Shabbat and holiday programs, a teen club, winter camp, Shabbat youth congregation and Hebrew school.

Is this the shlichus Chaya imagined for herself? "I always saw myself working more with students of college-age, but I find that I am really enjoying working with teens and younger children, as well as interacting with the children's parents." Chaya says that it's particularly her involvement in the "small little details, like being a listening ear, letting people know that she's there to support them and that she cares," that excite her the most.

For Chaya it was a big adjustment to move from a burgeoning Jewish community like Crown Heights that has all of the necessities and luxuries to live as a Chasid, to a small Jewish community that has "half an aisle of kosher food in the local supermarket" and

Moshiach Matters

The Midrash states: "The generations are redeemed only in the merit of the righteous women of each generation." This was also true of the redemption from Egypt. Since that redemption was for the Giving of the Torah soon after, the women were given precedence at that time. The same will be true of the future Redemption: since it will be in the merit of the righteous Jewish women, they will likewise be shown precedence with the Torah teachings of Moshiach. This is reinforced by the Kabbalistic teaching that our generation is a reincarnation of the generation that was redeemed from Egypt. (Sefer HaSichot 5749, Vol. I, p. 239)

What's In A Name?

BENTZION means "son of Zion" or "excellence." Zion refers to the holy land of Israel.


BERURYA is from the Hebrew meaning "pure, clean." In Aramaic it means "pious, kind, honest." Berurya was the wife of Talmudic scholar Rabbi Meir and a scholar in her own right. Her legal opinions are quoted in the Talmud.

News

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Important Times January 14 – 21 <i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am <i>Minchab/Maariv</i> 5:30pm Shabbos 5:15pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club</u> 8:15am <u>Kabbalah of Cholent</u> 9:05am <u>Shacharis</u> 9:30am Light Candles 5:30pm Shabbat Ends 6:28pm	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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It Once Happened The life of Queen Shlomit Alexandra was fraught with violent, political conflict and internecine strife. The saintly queen, however, survived to right the enormous crimes of her predecessors, and eventually became known as Shlomtzion - she who brought peace to Zion.

Her first husband, the ruthless king Aristobulus, seized power from his own mother, imprisoned his brothers and persecuted the Sages with great vengeance. After he died, having reigned only one year, the rule passed to his widow, Queen Shlomit Alexandra. She was the sister of the renowned Torah giant Shimon ben Shetach, the leading sage of the generation, and it was under his guidance that she did so much to repair the damage done to the Jewish people during this violent period.

The Queen's first act after the death of Aristobulus was to free his imprisoned brothers, the oldest of whom, Alexander Yannai, she married. Unfortunately, and to the terrible detriment of the Jewish nation, Yannai was no better than his short-lived brother. He devoted his energies to war, which took up most of his 27-year reign. His military exploits, however, were performed for his own lust for power and glory.

Far more serious for the Jewish people was the battle raging between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, tearing apart the fabric of the Jewish nation. The Sadducees, whose objective it was to eliminate the Oral Torah, strove in every possible fashion to seize power from the Pharisees, the ancestors of all Jews today. To that end, they exerted pressure on the rulers through political intrigue and even outright slander against their enemies. Eventually King Yannai used the mercenary troops which supplemented his own native army to mount a deadly persecution of these leaders of the Jewish people.

We can only imagine the terrible pain of Queen Shlomtzion, married to two Jewish kings of noble lineage, who perpetrated terrible crimes against the Torah Sages, the greatest of whom was her own brother. It was under her benevolent influence that Yannai was persuaded to relent in his war against the Pharisees for a time, and allow those remaining to return to Israel from their forced exiles. Once back in the Holy Land, Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach and his sister the queen were able to do much to restore Torah to the people. They acted to restore the authority of the Sanhedrin and to insure the education of the young.

The pair were responsible for establishing the first system of public education known. In earlier times education was the domain of the parents. If the parents were poor, uneducated, or deceased, the child was not educated.

This respite in the persecution of the Sages did not last, however. In a desperate attempt to wrest power from the Pharisees, the king and his Sadducee allies staged a ploy which succeeded in enraging the populace and provided a pretext on which to enlarge their terrible, bloody designs. When this despised king finally died he transferred power to his queen, instructing her to make peace with the Pharisees, calling his erstwhile allies, the Sadducees, "hypocrites."

Now the Queen could finally do as she wished, and her accomplishments are her praise even to our generation. It is said that during the reign of Queen Shlomtzion rain descended every Friday night (as a sign of blessing). The produce of the Land was remarkable. Wheat grew as big as kidneys, barley like olives and lentils were the size of gold dinars (the largest coin of that time).

When the Queen assumed the throne all persecution of the Sages ceased and the Pharisees were restored to their rightful positions of power. Shimon ben Shetach sat at the head of the Sanhedrin, and in every area of life the queen and her brother worked diligently to restore peace and harmony to the Land. It was during her rule that the institution of the ketuba, the legal marriage contract, was established. This ensured that no Jewish woman would be left economically unprotected in the event of a divorce or widowhood. The courts were reorganized so that justice was again available to the people.

Her reign was a true "Golden Age" for the Jewish people in their land. The Sages even preserved samples of the amazing grains which flourished in her time to show succeeding generations the rewards of observing the Torah. Just as during the reign of the pious King Shlomo, now also, the Jews lived securely in their land, undisturbed by the nations which surrounded them. ■

And Yitro heard (Ex. 18:1)

Yitro (Jethro) was not the only one to hear of the miracles G-d had wrought for Israel, as it says, "The nations heard it and trembled." However, Yitro was the only one who acted upon what he heard and became a Jew.

(The Kotzker Rebbe)



For by the very thing in which they sinned was punishment brought upon them (Ex. 18:11)

A person's punishment is determined by his own judgment of others: When a Jew sees someone transgressing and immediately "sentences" that person in his heart, he is thereby fixing his own sentence, as the sin most certainly exists in him as well.

(Baal Shem Tov)



Israel encamped opposite the Mountain (Ex. 19:2)

The Torah was specifically given on a mountain so that the Children of Israel would elevate and spiritually purify the physicality of the world. This is hinted to by the mountain, which is dust of the earth but is high, symbolizing the elevation of matter and its purification.

(Sefer Hamamarim)



Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8)

Explains Rashi, the great Torah commentator: Take heed to remember the Sabbath at all times, so that if you happen to find something special, set it aside for Shabbat. Likewise, our Sages state that we are not to give special names to the weekdays, but to refer to them in the context of Shabbat ("first day to Shabbat, second day to Shabbat," etc.). Thus we are constantly conscious of the upcoming Shabbat and prepare for it every day. The same applies to the Messianic Era, the "day that is entirely Shabbat and rest for life everlasting." Throughout the present "weekday" of exile we must constantly remember and remain conscious of the "Shabbat day" that is coming, preparing ourselves and everything around us for the arrival of Moshiach.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 11 Sivan, 5744)

Thoughts that Count