



# The Chabad Online Weekly Magazine

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## *Special Edition: 53 years, 53 Revolutionary Ideas*

*10 Shevat, 5763-January 13, 2003*

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### 1951: LOVE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Love According to the Rebbe

What if someone said to you, "I love you, but I don't like your children"? You'd probably say: "You may think that you love me, but you don't really. You don't care for what I care most deeply about. Obviously don't know anything about me, and you don't know what love is, either!"

The Torah commands us to "Love your fellow as yourself." The Torah also tells us to "Love the L-rd your G-d." This prompted the disciples of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) to ask their master: Which is the greater virtue, love of G-d or love of one's fellow?

Rabbi Schneur Zalman replied: the two are one and the same. He then explained: G-d loves every one of His children. So ultimately, love of one's fellow is a greater show of love for G-d than simply loving G-d. Because true love means that you love what your loved one loves.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was the founder of the Chabad branch of Chassidism, and his teachings on the love of G-d and man form an integral part of the philosophy and ethos of Chabad. Following Rabbi Schneur Zalman's passing in 1812, his son and successor, Rabbi DovBer, settled in the town of Lubavitch, which served as the movement's headquarters for the next 102 years. Was it by coincidence or design that Rabbi DovBer chose a place whose name means "Town of Love"? Lubavitchers (as Chabad Chassidim are also known) will simply answer that there's no such thing as "coincidence", for even the seemingly minor events of our lives are guided by divine providence and are replete with significance.

On the 10th of Shevat, 5711 (January 17, 1951) a

group of Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim gathered at 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York. The occasion was the first anniversary of the passing of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, and the official acceptance of the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who from that evening on would be known as the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe or simply, "the Rebbe".

That evening, the Rebbe also spoke about love--about the interrelation between love of G-d and love of one's fellow. But the issue had gotten more complex since the first Chabad Rebbe had spoken of it seven generations earlier.

Much had transpired in the interim: the "enlightenment" movement, which alienated many young Jews from their heritage; World War I, which displaced much of European Jewry (in 1915, the town of Lubavitch was destroyed and the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe fled to the interior of Russia); Communism's war on Judaism (in 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe was arrested for his efforts to preserve Jewish faith and practice throughout the Soviet empire, and sentenced to death; international pressure achieved his release and emigration from Russia); and the holocaust, which terminated 1000 years of flourishing Jewish life in Europe.

The destruction of European Jewry was a fresh memory to those present that winter evening in 1951 when the Rebbe assumed the mantle of leadership. Now they were in America, physically safe, but the spiritual future seemed bleak. The "melting pot" ethos of the New World did not encourage the cultivation of a Jewish identity and the observance of a Jewish way of life.

In Rabbi Schneur Zalman's day, it was universally accepted that a Torah way of life was the actualization of the bond between a Jew and his Father in Heaven. In 1951, the small minority of Torah-observant Jews in America were an object of contempt and derision by many of their own brethren. The most they could reasonably hope for was to persist in their own beliefs and try to pass them on to their children.

So it was not as simple as, "I love you, but I don't like your children." The feelings of the typical Torah-committed Jew in 1951 probably went something like this: "G-d, I love You and I love Your children--those who act towards You as children towards their father.

**1951: LOVE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Love According to the Rebbe*

I'm not that excited about those who disavow their bond with You." They might have even felt that their love of G-d was purer because it excluded those "rebellious" children.

That evening, after delivering the maamar (discourse of Chassidic teaching) which in the Chabad tradition marks a Rebbe's formal acceptance of his role, the Rebbe smiled and said: The Talmud says that "When you come to a city, do as its custom." Here in America it is customary to "make a statement"; I guess this means we should follow the local custom.

So the Rebbe issued a "statement":

The three loves--love of G-d, love of Torah and love of one's fellow--are one. One cannot differentiate between them, for they are of a single essence... And since they are of a single essence, each one embodies all three.

The Rebbe went on to explain that the fact that "each one embodies all three" has a twofold implication. It means that unless all three loves are present, neither of them is complete. But it also means that where any one of the three exist, it will eventually bring about all three.

A person who loves G-d, and is open to this love, will eventually come to love what G-d loves-- all His children. And his love will drive him to wish to bring G-d's children close to Torah--because that's what G-d loves. One who loves the Torah, will eventually internalize the recognition that the Torah's purpose and raison d'etre is to lovingly bring together G-d and all His children. And one who truly loves a fellow Jew will inevitably come to love G-d, since love of one's fellow is, in essence, the love of G-d; and he will be driven to bring his fellow Jews close to Torah, which is the expression and actualization of their bond with G-d.

When there is love of G-d but not love of Torah and love of Israel, this means that the love of G-d is also lacking. On the other hand, when there is love of a fellow Jew, this will eventually bring also a

love of Torah and a love of G-d...

So if you see a person who has a love of G-d but lacks a love of Torah and a love of his fellow, you must tell him that his love of G-d is incomplete. And if you see a person who has only a love for his fellow, you must strive to bring him to a love of Torah and a love of G-d--that his love toward his fellows should not only be expressed in providing bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty, but also to bring them close to Torah and to G-d.

When we will have the three loves together, we will achieve the Redemption. For just as this last Exile was caused by a lack of brotherly love, so shall the final and immediate Redemption be achieved by love for one's fellow.

In the five ensuing decades, the Rebbe's words became the mission statement of thousands of Chabad Houses and outreach centers throughout the world. More significantly, they heralded a sea change in the way that Jews regarded their heritage, their G-d, and each other. It is no exaggeration to say that the "statement" issued that evening by a 48-year-old holocaust survivor changed the face of world Jewry.

*By Yanki Tauber, editor@chabadonline.com*



**1952: LEADERSHIP  
ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

*The Emissaries*

What do you do if you have a vision, and are determined to see that vision implemented in the life of every man, woman and child on the face of the earth? Only you can make others see what you see, only you can communicate its urgency, only you can impart the motivation and empowerment to make it happen. But you are a single individual. How to bridge the miles, not to mention the cultural and psychological expanses, that separate you from them?

"From the time that I was a child attending cheder," the Lubavitcher Rebbe states in a letter he wrote on his 54th birthday in 1956, "and even earlier than that, there began to take form in my mind a vision of the future redemption: the redemption of Israel from its last exile, a redemption such as would explicate the suffering, the decrees and the massacres of galut."

The Redemption, of course, is not just the vision of a very exceptional child growing up in the pogrom-smiten city of Nikolayev in the first decade of the 20th century. The vision of a future world free of ignorance, suffering and strife -- a world which embodies and exhibits the goodness and perfection of its Creator -- is the subject of numerous biblical prophesies and the aspiration of a hundred generations of Jews. But no man in recent memory has made this vision the stuff and substance of his life, and has achieved so much towards its realization, as has the Rebbe.

Upon assuming the leadership of Chabad in 1950, the Rebbe set himself a goal: to reach every person on the face of the earth and inspire them to turn to the Torah as the guiding light by which to achieve personal and global redemption. To attain this goal, the Rebbe invented the shaliach.

Man is a creature of contradiction.

On the one hand, the human being is the most egotistical of G-d's creations. Other life forms are content if

their daily labor secures them food and shelter; we want to know "Are my talents being fully exploited?" and "Am I producing something that is distinctly my own?" Other creatures toil to survive and perpetuate their kind; we strive also for recognition, fulfillment and "self realization."

On the other hand, we are constantly seeking union and fusion with something greater than ourselves: a community of which we may be part, a personality or cause which we might submit to and serve. Deep within us resides a craving for self-abnegation -- a desire to shed the trappings of the ego and be absorbed within the universal and the divine.

Employers, political leaders and military commanders -- anyone who needs to motivate other people to do his or her bidding -- usually enlist one or the other of these human traits. An employer might, for example, encourage creativity, initiative and the attainment of "personal best" in the workplace. Or, he might take an opposite approach, placing the emphasis on teamwork and company loyalty, thereby tapping his employees' instinctive striving for an identity which transcends the personal.

Each approach has its drawbacks and limitations. For while each cultivates one of the above basic human qualities, it also runs contrary to the other, no less fundamental property of the human soul.

And then there is the approach of the shaliach.

Shaliach -- the word means "agent" and "emissary" -- is a halachic (Torah-legal) term for a person empowered by someone else to act in his stead. The shaliach first appears in the Torah in the person of Eliezer, whom Abraham commissioned to find a wife for his son, Isaac. Rebecca was selected and betrothed as a wife for Isaac by Eliezer -- she was legally Isaac's wife without her actual husband having ever set eyes on her or having exchanged a single word with her. In the words of the Talmud, "A person's shaliach is as he himself."

There exists a halachic model (the *eved* or "slave") for one who has abnegated his will, personality and very identity to that of his "master." There also exists the model of the "employee" (*sachir*), who assumes the obligation to perform a certain task for someone else, but whose personality and identity remain separate and distinct from the personality and identity of his "employer." The shaliach is unique in that he or she

**1952: LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***The Emissaries*

retains a great degree of autonomy in carrying out his mission, yet at the same time becomes a virtual extension of the person who commissioned him (the meshaleiach).

The shaliach does not abnegate his intellect, will, desires, feelings, talents and personal "style" to that of the one whom he represents; rather, he enlists them in the fulfillment of his mission. The result of this is not a lesser bond between the two, but the contrary: the meshaleiach is acting through the whole of the shaliach -- not only through the shaliach's physical actions, but also through the shaliach's personality, which has become an extension of the meshaleiach's personality.

The Rebbe took the halachic concept of shelichut and transformed it into a calling and a way of life. In the five decades of his leadership, he recruited, trained, motivated and commissioned thousands of men, women and children to act as his personal representatives and emissaries in hundreds of communities throughout the world.

Intrinsic to the role of shaliach is the challenge to bring one's own initiative, resourcefulness and creativity to the task. The Rebbe did not allow his sheluchim the luxury of mindless obedience to his dictates. Instead, he insisted that Chabad's programs and activities arise from the particular strengths and inclinations of the shaliach and the particular needs and circumstances of his locality.

But neither did the Rebbe send his emissaries to tackle their mission on their own. He empowered them to be "as he himself," so that a shaliach's every deed is imbued with the awareness that he is acting as an extension of the Rebbe's very person; that his thoughts and feelings, choices and deliberations, efforts and satisfactions, while the product of his own prowess and personality, are now serving as extensions of the Rebbe's prowess and personality.

Never before in the history of our people has one man built a following so large in number, so diverse, so highly motivated, and so successful in the furtherance of his vision. At the core of this phenomenal success is a seemingly benign legal dynamic, first employed more

than 3,600 years ago when Abraham sent Eliezer to find a wife for his son.

It is now more than seven years since the Rebbe's passing, and the urgency of his vision has never been more acute. Our hurting world needs him more than ever. Yet in a certain sense, he is here more than ever, a tactual presence in the thousands of lives imbued with his passion and compassion, his wisdom and commitment.

*By Yanki Tauber, (editor@chabadonline.com)*

## 1953: CHARITY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## The Myth of Charity

Jews don't believe in charity.

Don't be misled by their legendary philanthropy, by their saturation of social and humanitarian movements, by their invention of the pushkah, the meshulach and the UJA. Jews do not practice charity, and the concept is virtually non-existent in Jewish tradition.

Instead of charity, the Jew gives tzedakah-the word means "righteousness" and "justice." When the Jew contributes his money, time and resources to the needy, he is not being benevolent, generous or "charitable." He is doing what is right and just.

The story is told of a wealthy chassid who once received a letter from his rebbe, Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apt, requesting him to give 200 rubles to save a fellow chassid from financial ruin. The wealthy chassid regularly contributed to his rebbe's charitable activities, but this particular letter arrived at a financially inconvenient time and contained a request for an exceptionally large sum; after some deliberation, the chassid decided not to respond to the Rebbe's request.

Shortly thereafter, the chassid's fortunes began to fall. One business venture failed badly, and then another; before long he had lost everything.

"Rebbe," he cried, when he had gained admittance to Rabbi Abraham Joshua's room, "I know why this has happened to me. But was my sin so terrible to deserve so severe a punishment? And is it right to punish without warning? If you would have told me how important it was to give those 200 rubles, I would have carried out your instructions to the letter!"

"But you haven't been punished in any way," replied the Rebbe.

"What do you mean? All my wealth has been taken from me!"

"Nothing that was yours was taken from you," said the Rebbe. "You see, when my soul came down to earth, a certain amount of material resources were allotted to me for use in my work. However, my days and nights are taken up with prayer, the study and teaching of Torah, and counseling those who come to me for guidance; leaving no time for the task of managing all that money. So these resources were placed in the trust of a number of 'bankers'-people who would recognize their duty to support my work. When you failed to carry out your role, my account with you was transferred to another banker."

In our world, so flagrantly-and oftentimes violently-dichotomized by prosperity and poverty, there exist two general perspectives on wealth and property:

a) That these are the rightful possession of those who earned or inherited them. If they choose to share even a small a part of their possessions with others,

this is a noble act, worthy of praise and acclaim.

b) That the unequal distribution of the earth's resources among its inhabitants is a travesty. Owning more than one's share is an injustice, even a crime. Giving to the needy is not a "good deed" but the rectification of a wrong.

Jewish tradition rejects both these views. According to Torah law, giving to the needy is a mitzvah-a commandment and a good deed. This means that, on the one hand, it is not an arbitrary act, but a duty and an obligation. On the other hand, it is a good deed-a credit to the one who recognizes his duty and carries out his obligation.

The Jew believes that material wealth is not a crime, but a blessing from G-d. One who has so been blessed should regard himself as G-d's "banker"-one who is privileged to have been entrusted by the Creator with the role of dispensing the resources of His creation to others.

G-d could have allotted equal portions of His world to all its inhabitants. But then the world would have been nothing more than a showpiece of G-d's creative powers, predictable as a computer game and static as a museum display. G-d wanted a dynamic world-a world in which man, too, is a creator and provider. A world in which the controls have, to a certain extent, been handed over to beings who have the power to choose between fulfilling or reneging their role.

Thus Jewish law requires every individual to give tzedakah-even one who is himself sustained by the tzedakah of others. If the purpose of tzedakah were merely to rectify the unequal distribution of wealth between rich and poor, this law would make no sense. Tzedakah, however, is much more than that: it is the opportunity granted to every person to become a "partner with G-d in creation."

Giving tzedakah is, above all, a humbling experience. Before us stands a human being less fortunate than ourselves. We know that G-d could have just as easily provided him with everything he requires, instead of sending him to us for his needs. Here is a person who is suffering poverty in order to provide us with the opportunity to do a G-dly deed!

By the same token, if divine providence places us on the receiving end of a charitable act, we need not be demoralized by the experience. For we know that G-d could have just as easily provided us with all that we need Himself, and that our need for human aid is merely in order to grant another person the ability to do a G-dly deed. Our "benefactor" is giving us money or some other resource; we are giving him something far greater-the opportunity become a partner with G-d in creation.

In the words of our sages: "More than the rich man does for the pauper, the pauper does for the rich man."

**1954: HOW TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE ACCORDING TO  
THE REBBE**

Outreach

Our sages have said: "Words that come from the heart, enter the heart." It therefore follows that if you seek to correct a failing of your fellow and are unsuccessful, the fault lies not with that person, but with yourself. Had you truly been sincere, your words would certainly have had an effect.

*From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**1955: EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Education

In a mature tree, a gash here or a torn branch there is of little or no consequence. But the smallest scratch in the seed, the slightest nick in the sapling, results in an irrevocable deformity-in a flaw which the decades to come will deepen rather than erase.

Hence the great care and vigilance required in the education of the young. The values imparted to the child must be impeccable, free of even the slightest and most "forgivable" blemish.

*From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

*See also:* Do We Lie to Our Children

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=42747> and Judges and Kindergartens: Government and the idea of education in the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=42613>



**1956: MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Man and Woman*

It is a mistake to consider man and woman two separate beings. They are no more than two halves of a single form, two converse hemispheres that fit tightly together to make a perfect whole. They are heaven and earth encapsulated in flesh and blood.

It is only that on its way to enter this world, this sphere was shattered apart. What was once the infinity of a perfect globe became two finite surfaces. What was once a duet of sublime harmony became two bizarre solos of unfinished motions, of unresolved discord.

So much so, that each one hears in itself only half a melody, and so too it hears in the other. Each sees the other and says, "That is broken." Feigning wholeness, the two halves wander aimlessly in space alone.

Until each fragment allows itself to surrender, to admit that it too is broken. Only then can it search for the warmth it is missing. For the depth of its own self that was ripped away. For the harmony that will make sense of its song.

And in perfect union, two finite beings find in one another infinite beauty.



*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman,  
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**1957: STRIVING FOR WHAT YOU CAN'T ACHIEVE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## A Long Pole

Here's the problem: you're here, and you want to be there ("there" being someplace better, loftier, more spiritual than "here"). But you're not there, and won't be there for a good while, perhaps ever.

So do you act as if you're already there? Or do you tell yourself that here's just fine, and who needs there anyway?

You can become a hypocrite, or you can come to terms with your limitations. But there's also a third way--the way of the Long Pole.

In the outer chamber of the heichal (Sanctuary) in the Holy Temple stood the menorah--a five-foot, seven branched candelabra of pure gold. Every morning, a priest filled the menorah's seven lamps with the purest olive oil; in the afternoon, he would climb a three-step foot-ladder to kindle the menorah's lamps. The seven flames burned through the night, symbolizing the Divine light which radiated from the Holy Temple to the world.

Actually, it did not have to be a priest (kohen) who lit the menorah--the law states that an ordinary layman can also perform this mitzvah. But there is also a law that restricts entry into the Sanctuary to priests only--ordinary Israelites could venture no further than the azarah, the Temple courtyard.

These two laws create a legal paradox: a layman can light the menorah; but the menorah's designated place is inside the Sanctuary, and a layman cannot enter into the Sanctuary.

Technically, there are solutions: a layman can light the menorah by means of long pole, or the menorah can be carried out to him by a kohen and then replaced in the Sanctuary. But the inconsisten-

cy remains: if the Torah believes that an ordinary person should be able to light the menorah, why doesn't it place the menorah in a part of the Temple accessible to ordinary people? And if the sanctity of the menorah is such that it requires the higher holiness of the Sanctuary, why does the Torah permit someone who cannot attain this level to light it?

This paradox, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is intentionally set up by the Torah in order to convey to us a most profound lesson: the lesson of the long pole.

The lesson of the long pole says that we should aspire to spiritual heights that lie beyond our reach. Not that we should presume to be what we are not--that would be like an ordinary person entering the Sanctuary--but neither should we desist from our efforts to reach that place. Even when we know that we, ourselves, will never be "there", we can still act upon that place, influence it, even illuminate it.

At times, this means that someone from that higher place reaches down to us. At times, it means that we contrive a way to reach beyond what we are at the present time. In either case, we are what Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch calls a "lamplighter": a person who carries a long pole with a flame at its end and goes from lamp to lamp to ignite them; no lamp is too lowly, and no lamp is too lofty, for the lamplighter and his pole.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber; (editor@chabadonline.com)*

1958: THE REBBE ON G-D

## Within and Beyond

There are two vantage points for G-d: Within and Beyond.

'Within' is the view of the created. Fixed within a defined reality, consumed with its own importance, where things matter and life is real.

'Beyond' is the view of the Creator, detached and transcendent. Where all that has begun has already ended, nothing can assert its significance, for all is nil.

There is also an Essence of both Within and Beyond, neither subject to the narrow view of a finite being, nor biased by the detachment of the Infinite. Neither created nor Creator, neither below nor Above, neither existence nor its absence.

It is the Essence, both Beyond and Within all things. Beyond, because it needs no purpose. Within, because it nevertheless chose one.

Both Within and Beyond breathe with that purpose, the purpose of their very being: That the Essence be revealed from Within.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman*

**1959: THE TORAH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Talking to Himself*

Torah is the interface between the Infinite and creation. On the outside, it speaks the language of humankind. On the inside is depth without end.

Grasp either end and you have nothing. Grasp both and you have G-d Himself.

Torah is not about getting to the truth. When you are immersed in Torah, even while pondering the question, even while struggling to make sense of it all, you are at truth already.

Torah is about being truth.

He talks with Himself, entertained by His own thoughts. The thoughts imply a background, which is the world. But the Torah, those are the thoughts themselves.

And we? Our souls are the self with whom He speaks.

*From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered  
by Tzvi Freeman, [tfreeman@chabadonline.com](mailto:tfreeman@chabadonline.com)*

## 1960: JUDAISM ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### For Real

In his famed introduction to the Talmudic chapter of Chelek, Maimonides enumerates the thirteen basic principles of the Jewish faith.

The first four principles deal with the belief in G-d: that G-d is the Original Cause upon which every creation is utterly dependent for its existence; that He is absolutely one and singular; that He is non-corporeal and timeless. The fifth principle establishes man's duty to serve Him and fulfill the purpose for which he was created. Principles six to eleven establish that G-d relates to humanity: that He communicates His will to man; that every word of the Torah was transmitted by G-d to Moses; that G-d observes and is concerned with the behavior of man; that He punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous.

The final two principles deal with the era of Moshiach: the belief that there will arise a leader who will bring the entire world to recognize and serve the Creator, ushering in an era of universal peace and Divine perfection.

What does it mean when we say that something is a "basic principle" in Judaism? A simple definition would be that in order to qualify as a "believing Jew" one must accept the truth of these thirteen precepts. But the Torah clearly makes no such distinctions. As Maimonides himself writes in his eighth principle:

"... This entire Torah, given to us by Moses, is from the mouth of the Almighty - namely, that it was communicated to him by G-d.... In this, there is no difference between the verses, 'The sons of Ham were Kush and Mitzrayim,' 'The name of his wife was Meithavel' and 'Timna was a concubine,' and the verses, 'I Am the L-rd your G-d' and 'Hear O Israel, [the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One]': all are from the mouth of the Almighty, all is the Torah of G-d, perfect, pure, holy and true.... Our sages have said: Anyone who believes that the entire Torah is from the mouth of the Almighty except for a single verse, is a heretic...."

So a "basic principle" is more than a required set of beliefs; that would apply to each and every word in the Torah. Rather, these are thirteen principles upon which everything else rests. The Hebrew word Maimonides uses is *yesodot*, "foundations": different parts of an edifice could conceivably exist independently of each other, but without the foundation, the entire building would collapse. So, too, each of these thirteen principles is a "foundation" to the entire Torah.

In other words, while every word in the Torah is equally important to the believer as a person, these principles are crucial to the faith itself. To deny that "Do not steal" is a divine commandment is no less heretical than to deny the existence of G-d; but belief in the rest of the Torah is not dependent upon the fact that G-d said not to steal. On the other hand, things like the existence of G-d, His absolute and exclusive power, His involvement in human affairs, and His communication of the Torah to man, obviously prerequisite the whole of Judaism. Without these "foundations" the rest is virtually meaningless.

One difficulty, however, remains with this explanation: Why is the belief in Moshiach included among the foundations of the Jewish faith? Obviously, the concept of Moshiach is an important part of Judaism. The Torah speaks of it (in Deuteronomy 30 and Numbers 24, among others), the prophets are full of it. But could one not conceivably believe in the rest of the Torah without accepting its vision of a future perfect world?

#### *Not In Heaven*

The Torah details a most exacting and demanding code of behavior, governing every hour of the day, every phase of life, and every aspect of the human experience. It takes a lifetime of committed labor, tremendous self-discipline, and every iota of man's intellectual, emotional and spiritual prowess to bring one's life into utter conformity with the Torah's edicts and ideals.

Thus, there are two possible ways in which to view the Torah's vision of life.

One may conceivably argue that the level of perfection expected by Torah is beyond feasible reach for a majority of people. From this perspective, Torah is an ideal to strive towards, a vision of absolute goodness designed to serve as a point of reference for imperfect man. A person ought to seek attaining this ideal - says this view - although he will probably never reach it, for he will much improve himself in the process.

The second view takes the Torah at its word: each and every individual is capable of, and expected to attain, the perfectly righteous and harmonious life it mandates.

## 1960: JUDAISM ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### For Real

Torah is not an abstract ideal, but a practical and implementable blueprint for life.

The Torah itself leaves no room for doubt on its own view of the matter: "For the mitzvah which I command you this day," it states, "it is not beyond you nor is it remote from you. It is not in heaven... nor is it across the sea.... Rather, it is something that is very close to you, in your mouth, in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

#### *Underlying Perspectives*

These two views reflect two different ways of looking at the essence of G-d's creation. If man is inherently or even partially evil, then obviously he can go either way. There is no reason to assume that he will, or even can, attain a state of perfect righteousness. A world community that is utterly committed to goodness, in which every single individual acts in concert with the purpose for which he was created, can only be the dream of a chronic optimist, or of one who is hopelessly out of touch with "reality."

Yet if one believes that the world is intrinsically good; that G-d has imbued His every creation with the potential to reflect His absolute goodness and perfection; then, one's concept of reality is completely different. Then, our currently harsh reality is the anomalous state, while the reality of Moshiach is the most natural thing in the world.

In other words, where a person stands on Moshiach expresses his attitude vis-?-vis the entire Torah. Is Torah's formula for life a pipe dream, or is it a description of the true nature of creation? If the Torah is nothing more than a theoretical utopia, then one does not expect a world free of greed, jealousy and hate any time in the near future. But if the Torah mirrors the essence of man, then one not only believes in a "future" Moshiach, but understands that the world is capable of instantaneously responding to his call.

This explains why belief in Moshiach entails not only the conviction that he will "eventually" arrive, but the anticipation of his imminent coming. In the words of Maimonides: "The Twelfth Principle concerns the era

of Moshiach: to believe and to validate his coming; not to think that it is something of the future - even if he tarries, one should await him...." And in his Mishneh Torah, Maimonides states: "One who does not believe in him, or one who does not anticipate his coming, not only denies the prophets, he denies the Torah itself" (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings, 11:1).

When Moshiach is that very realistic possibility, for another moment to go by without the Redemption taking place is far, far more "unrealistic" (that is, less in keeping with the true nature of things) than the prospect of its immediate realization.

#### *The Nature and Definition of Truth*

Of course, man has been granted freedom of choice. But the choice between good and evil is not a choice of what to be - he cannot change his quintessential self- but the choice of how to act. Man can choose to express his true essence in his behavior, or choose to suppress it.

Ultimately, the truth, by nature and definition, always comes to light. So, while man can choose how to act in any given moment, the very nature of humanity, and of G-d's creation as a whole, mandates that it not only can, but will attain the perfection of the era of Moshiach.

Moshiach means that the true nature of creation will ultimately come to light. That "evil" is but the shallow distortion of this truth, and has no enduring reality. That man will free himself of hate and ignorance. That every human being will fulfill his divinely ordained role as outlined in the Torah, transforming the world into a place suffused with the wisdom, goodness and perfection of its Creator.

Moshiach means that the Torah is for real.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber, editor@chabadonline.com; Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningfullife.com)*

## 1961: SIN ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## What Is Sin?

Like almost everything else, it depends on who you ask.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms 25) describes a sort of "panel discussion" in which this question is posed to four different authorities--Wisdom, Prophecy, Torah and G-d--each of whom gives a different definition of sin.

According to Wisdom sin is a harmful deed. According to Prophecy it is death. Torah sees it as folly. And G-d sees it as an opportunity.

The philosophical view of sin is that it is a bad idea, like walking barefoot in the snow or eating too many fatty foods. If you do bad things, bad things will happen to you.

Does this mean that Someone sits up there, tabulating sins and dispensing punishments? Well, yes, though it is not as simplistic as a vengeful G-d getting even with His little earth creatures for daring to defy His instructions. Is frostbite G-d's punishment for that barefooted walk in the snow? Is heart disease G-d's revenge for a high cholesterol diet? Ultimately it is, if you accept that everything that happens, happens because G-d wants it to happen. But what it really means is that G-d has established certain "laws of nature" that describe the patterns of His actions upon our existence. There are physical laws of nature--the ones that scientists measure and hypothesize. There are also spiritual laws of nature, which dictate that spiritually beneficial deeds bring spiritual benefit, and spiritually detrimental deeds cause spiritual harm. And since our physical existence derives from and mirrors the spiritual reality, a person's spiritual and moral behavior ultimately affects his physical life as well.

Thus King Solomon (who is the source of the "Wisdom" perspective in the above Midrash) states in the book of Proverbs: "Evil pursues iniquity."

"Prophecy" takes this a step further. Sin is not only a harmful deed--it is the ultimately harmful deed. Prophecy (which represents the apogee of man's endeavor to commune with G-d) defines "life" as connection with G-d. Sin--man's turning away from G-d--is a disruption of this connection. Hence, sin is

death.

Torah agrees that sin is a harmful deed. It also agrees that it's a disruption of the flow of life from Creator to creation. Indeed, Torah is the source of both Wisdom's perspective and Prophecy's perspective on sin. But Torah also goes beyond them both in recognizing that the soul of man would never willingly and consciously do such a stupid thing.

Sin, says Torah, is an act of folly. The soul loses its head, and in a moment of irrationality and cognitive confusion does something that is contrary to its own true desire. So sin can be transcended, when the soul recognizes and acknowledges the folly of its transgressions and reasserts its true will. Then the true self of the soul comes to light, revealing that the sin was in fact committed only by the soul's most external, malleable self, while its inner self was never involved in the first place.

And what does G-d say? G-d, of course, invented the laws of nature (both physical and spiritual) and the Wisdom that recognizes how they operate. G-d is the source of life, and it is He who decreed that it should flow to the human soul via a channel constructed (or disrupted) by the deeds of man. And G-d gave us the Torah and its formulae for spiritual sanity, self-discovery and transcendence. So G-d is the source of the first three perspectives on sin.

But there is a fourth perspective that is G-d's alone: sin as the opportunity for "return" (teshuvah).

Teshuvah is a process that, in its ultimate form, empowers us to not only transcend our failings but to also redeem them: to literally travel back in time and redefine the essential nature of a past deed, transforming it from evil to good.

To achieve this, we first have to experience the act of transgression as a negative thing. We have to agonize over the utter devastation it has wrecked on our soul. We have to recognize, disavow and renounce its folly. Only then can we go back and change what we did.

So is sin a bad, harmful deed? Is it the very face of death? Is it mere stupidity, to be shrugged off by an inherently wise and pristine soul? Is it a potent opportunity for conquest and growth? Turns out, it's all four. But it can only be the fourth if it's also the first three.



**1962: THE BELIEVER'S  
RESPONSE TO SUFFERING IN G-  
D'S WORLD ACCORDING TO THE  
REBBE**

Why?

It's probably the oldest question in the history of human thought. It's surely the most disturbing, the most frequently asked and the least satisfactorily answered: Why, oh why, do bad things happen to good people?

Everyone asks the question-philosophers, theologians, butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers. No one really answers it. The Bible devotes the 41 chapters of the Book of Job to the subject, offering several interesting explanations only to refute them all, the conclusion being that finite man cannot fathom the ways of G-d.

For most, the protest against evil is something that rises out of one's own encounters with the rough spots of life. To a true leader who feels the pain of his people as his own, it is a bottomless cry issuing from the seemingly bottomless well of human suffering.

It didn't take long for Moses to issue that cry. Shortly after G-d appeared to him in a burning bush to appoint him liberator of Israel, Moses was back.

And Moses returned to G-d and said: "My G-d, why have You done evil to this people?! Why have You sent me?! For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done worse to this nation; and You have not saved Your people!" (Exodus 5:22-23).

And what does G-d say? Hold on just a little longer and you'll see that it all turns out right at the end. Encouraging words, especially when coming from G-d Himself; but still no answer for the ultimate Question.

Was it a failing on the part of Moses that he protested G-d's way of doing things? A cursory reading of the Talmudic and Midrashic expositions on Moses' dialogue with G-d would suggest that it was. Moses is criticized for not measuring up to the unquestioning faith of the Patriarchs; by some accounts, he is even punished for his outburst.

But a fundamental rule of Torah scholarship is that "the Torah does not speak negatively even of an impure animal" unless there is a positive, constructive lesson to be derived. To what end does the Torah tell us about Moses' "failing"?

Some would say that this is to teach us that even great men such as Moses can experience doubt and despair. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, however, takes a different approach. Moses' protest to G-d, says the Rebbe, was not a breach of faith, but an act of faith of the highest order.

Indeed, the question/protest/outcry, "Why have You done evil to Your people?!" can issue only from the mouth of a true believer. The non-believer, too, may be outraged by the cruelty and suffering our world abounds with, but just who is he outraged at? The blind workings of fate? The oblivious and apersonal god of physical law and evolutionary process? The random arrangement of quarks that make up the universe?

Even people who believe in G-d are not necessarily driven to confront Him as Moses did. They may not believe that He is truly responsible for all that transpires in the world. They may not be convinced of His ultimate goodness. They may think that it's pointless to protest to Him, since He doesn't really care how they feel about it. Or maybe everything's just fine in their lives, and what's happening to the rest of the world just doesn't concern them.

The true believer, on the other hand, knows that everything that happens happens only because it is ordained from Above. He knows that G-d is the essence of good and that only good flows from Him. And he also knows that man can talk to G-d and expect a response to his entreaties. So he cannot but cry out: "My G-d, why have You done evil to Your people?!"

This is what we must learn from Moses. We must speak to G-d, confront Him, ask Him: Why is there evil and suffering in Your world? We do not know enough to comprehend the answer; we must, however, believe and care enough to ask the question.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
rendered by Yanki Tauber, editor@chabadonline.com*

See also THE REBBE ON THE HOLOCAUST  
<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=64888>



**1963: THE YOUTH REVOLUTION OF THE 60'S ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

The Rebbe on the 60's

*The following is a free translation of a directive the Rebbe issued to his chassidim at a gathering on Purim of 1963*

G-d has granted our generation opportunities that have never been granted before.

One of these opportunities is the recent awakening among the youth for what they call "a return to roots." They hunger and thirst for the word of G-d; it's only that they are not, as of yet, aware as to where the word of G-d is to be found. The sole responsibility therefore lies with those who are already immersed in the life-giving waters of Torah to explain to them that their thirst is for G-d's perfect Torah, without compromise.

The first step, the rejection of the negative, our generation's youth have already achieved. They have shattered the idols and icons which prevailed among some of their parents. They have recognized that the man-made ideologies that were embraced forty and fifty years ago are false. We need only bring them to the second step, the acceptance of the positive---the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvot.

We are living in a time of opportunity and divine grace, and much can be achieved. We must not squander these times, G-d forbid.

We are living in a time that "The voice of my beloved knocks: Open for me" (Song of Songs 5:2). When G-d knocks on the door of every Jew's heart and begs that it open to Him. G-d is not asking that we demolish walls or break down doors, only that we open up to Him as the point of a needle. G-d can no longer suffer, so to speak, the tribulations of the *galut* night. He promises that when we open to Him as the point of needle He will do the rest, and in the blink of an eye, bring the true redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

**1964: TESHUVAH (REPENTANCE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Redefining the Past*

Nothing can hold you back - not your childhood, not the history of a lifetime, not even the very last moment before now. In a moment you can abandon your past. And once abandoned, you can redefine it.

If the past was a ring of futility, let it become a wheel of yearning that drives you forward. If the past was a brick wall, let it become a dam to unleash your power.

The very first step of change is so powerful, the boundaries of time fall aside. In one bittersweet moment, the sting of the past is dissolved and its honey salvaged.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
(TFreeman@Chabadonline.com)*



## 1965: FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## On The Essence of Choice

*You have chosen us from all the nations; You loved us and desired us. You raised us above all tongues and sanctified us through Your commandments...* (Siddur, mussaf prayer for the festivals)

*"[Freedom of] choice has been granted to every man... This concept is a fundamental principle and a pillar of the Torah and its commandments* (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 5:1)

The concept of choice is central to the belief and philosophy of the Jew. Two of Judaism's most basic principles revolve around choice: G-d's choice of Israel as His "chosen people," and the free choice that has been granted to man.

In this article, we shall examine the Lubavitcher Rebbe's unique conception of the dynamics of choice in both the human and supernal realms: how as it is exercised in the mind and soul of man, and how these dynamics are paralleled in G-d's choice of the people of Israel

**Choice in Three Dimensions**

Since, by definition, a choice is not coerced, it would seem that the word "free" in "free choice" is superfluous. But there are various degrees of freedom that a chooser may possess in making his choice.

All told, there are three levels of choice:

a) Compelled choice

One level of "choice" relates to the conventional, everyday usage of the term. We each make countless "choices" every day: Coffee or tea? Shall we paint the picket fence white or green? Should I take the job in New York or the one in Seattle?

As long as no one is forcing your decision, yours can be said to be a "free" choice. But are you truly choosing freely? Each of the options confronting you is "armed" with an entire array of qualities to sway your choice. The taste of coffee draws you to it, while your sense of decorum dictates tea, which everyone else is having. White will liven up your gloomy backyard but will also show the dirt sooner than the green. The pay in New York is higher but so is the crime rate.

You will weigh all the factors and make your decision. But have you chosen? Or have the chosen thing's quali-

ties, together with elements of your upbringing, personality and past experiences, conspired to compel your choice? Ultimately, you chose what you did because there is something about it which made you need or want it. Even if the reasons for both options were equally compelling, the one that you did choose was chosen because of its particular qualities. You made a choice as to which set of influences to succumb to--hardly the epitome of freedom.

b) Random choice

But suppose that you are above it all. Suppose that nothing about these choices has the power to hold or sway you. That, to you, the taste of coffee and social niceties are equally irrelevant, and white and green are simply two cans of paint. That you are utterly immune to salary figures and the threats of a violent city.

Since the advantages and shortcomings of both options are of no significance to you, you are in a position to make a "free" (i.e. non-influenced) choice: to select one of two (or more) options for no reason other than that that's the one you've chosen.

Nevertheless, this is still not the ultimate in choice and freedom. True, you are free of the attractions and rationalizations which ordinarily influence the choices of men. But how did you choose? By a mental throw of dice? By some totally arbitrary surge of will? The choice could have gone either way, correct? So where were you in all this? In what way have you exercised your freedom to choose? You have merely surrendered to something that is beyond you.

c) Quintessential choice

We seem to be in a catch-22 situation. Is there ever a free choice between A and B? If you chose A for a reason, if there is something about its qualities that attracts you, then it is not really you who is doing the choosing--your "choice" is determined by its qualities and by your own biases and behavior patterns. And if you choose it for no reason, again you are not choosing, only serving as a pawn to the capricious turns of fate.

But what if your choice is determined by the very essence of what you are? What about the choice to live, the choice to be free, the choice to have a child? Certainly, these choices are motivated by a reason. But theirs is not an external reason, nor is it a reason that is related to your "external" self (i.e. your mind-set, your emotional make-up, your personality). The "reason" for these choices is you. For life is but the desire to be. And what is freedom if not the opportunity to realize one's most quintessential potentials? And what are children if not the continuity of self? The quintessence of your

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being is what dictates that you choose life, liberty and parenthood.

The fact that the outcome of these choices is determined makes them no less free. On the contrary: this is the ultimate proof of their freedom. Because when choice is truly free, when the quintessence of self asserts itself, then the other, anti-self option (death, enslavement, childlessness) is obviously rejected. In other words, we usually see the existence of more than one option as the hallmark of "choice"--choice, in the conventional definition of the term, means the ability to choose between A and B. But when it comes to the ultimate definition of choice, the very opposite is true. When your choice is free of all constraints and inhibitions, external or internal, there is no "other" option--any more than there is another you.

To summarize: On the first and lowest level of choice, our choices are determined by external factors--the qualities of the chosen thing and the mental and emotional baggage we lug through life. The only thing that makes this any sort of choice at all is the existence of more than one option: we can resist one set of influences to embrace another.

A second, higher level of choice is one that is free of compulsion--at least, there are no identifiable factors, conscious or otherwise, that influence one's decision. Again, there are two or more options (if there weren't, it wouldn't be a choice). But the very fact that the choice can go either way indicates that, ultimately, it is not the person himself--that is, his singular essence--who is doing the choosing.

On the third, highest level of choice there is only one option: the course that represents the uninhibited choice of one's deepest self. The ultimate criterion of "free choice" is not "Is it determined?" but "What determines it?" *Every* choice is determined by something, be it a rational motive or an intuitive flash of no traceable origins. True choice is when one's course of action is determined by, and only by, the very quintessence of self.

*Three That Are One*

These three degrees of choice are actually three aspects of the same phenomenon. Often, we experience only the most external layer of our power to choose. But there are also points in our life in which this outer layer is peeled away and we are in touch with a deeper--and

freer--dimension of our choice. Finally, there are those rare moments when our most deeply rooted drives assert themselves, effecting a decision that is the very core and quintessence of choice.

Let us take the example of a choice we make countless times, and in countless different ways, every day--the choice to live. No matter how difficult and tiresome the effort may become, we continue to elect life and survival.

As we generally experience it (if and when we think about it at all) this is firstly a "choice" in the most commonplace sense of the term. We are faced with two options: to live, or not to live (G-d forbid). On the one hand we have the reasons for life: its joys and rewards, our commitments to our loved ones, etc. On the other hand we have its burdens and heartaches. We decide that it's worth the effort. We have been swayed by the many compulsions for life.

But then there are those circumstances under which all the conventional "reasons" to live no longer apply. When life and death, stripped bare of their advantages and faults, are seen as equally significant (or non-significant). Yet something inside us says "Live!" Why? There is no why, only the simple fact that a choice has been made--a choice free of all the motives which compel it in its lower, lesser incarnation.

On this level, we experience choice as a completely arbitrary throw of dice, which could just as easily have fallen on the other, negative side. The chooser can offer no reason, no explanation for his choice. "This is what I chose," is all he can say, "this is what I have drawn from the lottery of choice."

In truth, these two experiences of choice are two perspectives on one reality. Also one who chooses life because of its positive qualities is, on a deeper level of self (--a level of self to which the life's "benefits" are irrelevant), really making a "blind" supra-rational choice. His "compelled" choice is but an expression of the "arbitrary" choice which transcends the external reasons for life.

Ultimately, however, *both* these dimensions of a person's choice are outgrowths of a third, even deeper dimension which lies at their core: choice as the uninhibited assertion of his quintessential self. A person experiences choice on this level when he recognizes that, ultimately, his desire for life is not caused by its particular benefits, nor is it the lot he has drawn from the blue yonder of arbitrary impulse. It is an expression of his very "I": an expression of a definitive, unequivocal choice to project his being and potentials into the arena of physical existence.

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So when we choose life in many "little" and "ordinary" ways every day, we are actually making this choice on three different levels. On the rational and emotional level, we choose life because of its rewards. On a deeper level of self, where such mundane considerations are irrelevant, it is a "blind" supra-rational choice. Simultaneously, the very core of our being is choosing life, and it is this very choice that is being reiterated by the more external layers of our self.

*A Seeming Contradiction*

This explains an apparent contradiction in what the Torah says regarding the free choice of man.

In the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy we read:

*See, I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love G-d, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments...*

*Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life...*

What is meant by the words "And you shall choose life"? Is this a commandment? A promise? A statement of fact? In any case, the Torah has no doubts about the ultimate outcome of man's choice between good and evil. "In the end of days," prophesies Moses, "you will return to G-d your Lord and you will obey His voice" (Deuteronomy 4:30). No matter to what depths we may fall, no matter how far we may stray from the fulfillment of his purpose, "G-d... devises means that the forsaken one be not forsaken" (II Samuel 14:14). In the word of Maimonides, "The Torah has already promised that Israel is destined to repent at the end of their exile and will immediately be redeemed." How is this to be reconciled with the "fundamental principle" of free choice?

The same question could be asked on the cosmic level. The purpose of creation is that man develop the divine goodness and perfection that has been invested within his own soul and in all of existence by the Creator. The ultimate realization of this purpose is the era of Moshiach, described by the prophets as a world free of evil and strife, a world in which man has overcome ignorance, jealousy and hatred to bring about the harmonious world that G-d envisioned at creation and outlined in the Torah.

A basic principle of the Jewish faith is the belief in Moshiach as an absolute eventuality: the belief that man

not only can, but actually will, attain this goal (indeed, can the possibility exist that G-d's purpose in creation will not be realized?!). But if man has been granted freedom of choice, how can we be certain of his eventual election of good? Does not "freedom of choice" mean that it can go either way?

*The Choice(s) of the Jew*

As explained above, choice is a three-tiered affair, consisting of three dimensions or experiences of the same act of choice. The same applies to our choice to pursue good and reject evil by following the commandments of the Torah.

On the most elementary, everyday level, we choose the path of Torah as the most beneficial course to life. We see how Torah refines a person's character, establishes a harmonious social order and imbues our lives with meaning and purpose. After all, G-d is the designer and creator of life; it stands to reason that His instructions on to how to live it are the surest path toward spiritual and material fulfillment. Not that a selfish and hedonistic life, unencumbered by morals and responsibilities, doesn't have its enticements. Indeed, this is what makes our choice between good and evil a *choice*: we are faced with two options, each with its own attractions and compulsions. Our choice of good is because of its virtues: because we understand that "I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil"-- that good is synonymous with life while evil ultimately spells its destruction.

But not always are the advantages of good perceivable. There are times when "darkness covers the earth and a fog envelops the nations," when a world gone amok eclipses the vitality of good and the goodness of life. When "the way of the wicked prospers" while the righteous suffer. When our sensitivity to the spiritual rewards of fulfilling the divine will is deadened. Such conditions serve to elevate our choice of good to a higher--and freer--level: no longer is our commitment to the Almighty advantageous in any perceivable way; no longer is it compelled by our reason and by our perception of reality. When we choose good under such conditions, it is a pure choice: beyond motive, beyond rationale, beyond anything save our "blind" faith in G-d and the fact that we have cast our lot with the fulfillment of His will.

What both these levels of choice have in common is that they share the "conventional" definition of choice: the existence of two options (good and evil). On both these levels, we could have conceivably chosen other-

## 1965: FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

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wise--we could have opted for the "advantages" of evil, or we could have failed to make the "leap of faith" that the second level of choice demands.

But on the highest level of choice there is no other option. Our quintessential identity as G-d's chosen people breaks through all our secondary and superimposed personas, and freely translates into the unequivocal commitment to the fulfillment of the divine will in our daily lives.

This is the deeper significance of the three separate sentences, quoted above, in which the Torah sets down the principle of "free choice." Indeed, there is a level of which G-d says "See, I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil"--a choice that is based on the fact that we see and sense goodness as beneficial and evil as detrimental to life. There is also a higher level of choice on which "Life and death I have set before you"--when "life" and "death" are simply set before us as equals. But both these choices are but echoes of the ultimate choice: "You *shall* choose life." When you truly choose, that choice will be life.

And also when you choose life because of its virtues, or when you choose it without apparent cause or reason, the true source of your choice is the fact that you are choosing--and you, the real you, always chooses life. And because this is the choice dictated by your quintessential self, it is the choice that will eventually assert itself in all your decisions. For your true self can only remain suppressed for so long: ultimately, inevitably, it must come to light.

So it is with absolute certainty that the Jew believes that there will come a time when the quintessential truth of every created being will assert itself and opt for life. This is not in contradiction with the concept of "free choice"--it is its ultimate expression.

*G-d's Choice: Layers and Projections*

*From my own flesh, I perceive G-d (Job 19:26).*

G-d, of course, is a purely singular being--He certainly does not possess a "character," a "personality" or the many other components which make the human "self" such a multi-layered affair. And yet, there is a certain parallel between the human and the Divine, a parallel which enables us to employ the workings of our own self as a metaphor by which to gain insight into the divine reality.

This parallel exists because, although G-d does not intrinsically possess an "external" self or character, He chose to project such a "self" from His singular essence in order to impart certain characteristics to His relationship with our existence. This is the divine act of "constriction" (*tzimtzum*) discussed in the teaching of Kabbalah: G-d's projection of His infinite and featureless self via the relatively finite and anthropomorphic reality of His "attributes" (*sefirot*), in order to touch our lives in a manner that we can relate to.

"From my own flesh, I perceive G-d." Just as our exercise of choice is expressed on three different levels, so it is with G-d's choice of Israel as His "cherished people from among all the nations." Here, too, we have three different dimensions or definitions of choice. And here, too, the three "choices," despite the dissimilarities between them, are actually three successive incarnations, each extrinsic to the other, of the same reality.

On the most external level, G-d's choice of Israel has its "reasons." Abraham, the first Jew, was the only member of his generation to search for the truth and recognize the One G-d; he then devoted his life, to the point of self-sacrifice, to bring this truth to a pagan world--a legacy and mission he imparted to his child and grandchild, out of whom sprung the Jewish nation. In the words of the Torah, "Because He loved your forefathers, He chose their children" (Deuteronomy 4:37). Our sages also cite our faith in G-d and the preservation of our identity throughout our long and bitter enslavement in Egypt as virtues which made us deserving of redemption and choice. The very nature and character of the Jew, attests the Talmud, is modest, compassionate and charitable, and "Even the transgressors of Israel are as full of good deeds as a pomegranate [is full of seeds]."

But can we say that G-d chose us because of our positive qualities? Indeed, can any "reason" compel or influence His choice? Can the paragon of infinity and perfection need or benefit from anything? True, G-d does "care" about the behavior of man. He Himself tells us that our positive deeds cause Him pleasure and that He is angered by our sins. But this is only because He desired to grant import and significance to our deeds. In other words, when we speak of G-d's desire of good and His abhorrence of evil, we are speaking of a projected divine "self" through which the Almighty chose to relate to us and to be "affected" by what we do. It is on this level that we are chosen because of our virtues. In truth, however, G-d is beyond all that. "If you sin, how have you affected Him? If your transgressions multiply, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? What can He possibly receive from your hand?" (Job 35:6).

## 1965: FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## On The Essence of Choice

On this level, when G-d chooses it is a choice, pure and free, without reason and compulsion. In the words of the prophet: "'Is not Esau a brother to Jacob?,' says G-d. 'But I love Jacob'" (Malachi 1:2). Even from the perspective in which Jacob is no more worthy (for "worthiness" is a non-issue), G-d chooses Jacob.

Does this mean that His choice could have gone either way? That the "lot" could have conceivably fallen to Esau? That we are G-d's chosen people by an arbitrary toss of supernal dice? Ultimately, the answer is no. For also this higher level of choice does not describe the true nature of G-d's choice of Israel. This, too, relates to a "projected" divine reality rather than to the divine essence, a projection whose purpose is to create a reality in which "Also darkness is not dark for You... for darkness is as light" --a reality that is oblivious to good and evil, allowing for the "free" choice of man between right and wrong (level #2 of "free choice").

Ultimately, however, the nature of the divine implies that our choice as G-d's people was *not* arbitrary. Can G-d be subject to whim? To chance? To a twist of fate? Obviously, the Infinite and Omnipotent is not subject to anything. He is the determinant of all, and no determinants--rational or inexplicable--determine anything in regard to Him.

The ultimate definition of "choice" is that it is the free and uninhibited expression of the chooser's quintessential self. So it is with G-d: if He chose, His choice reflects His singular reality. If He chose, His choice is absolute and unequivocal, not an arbitrary selection out of several possibilities. If He chose us, then it is ultimately a choice that is rooted in His very essence.

The two lower dimensions of choice are also valid descriptions of G-d's choice of Israel. But they are only part of the story--the part that pertains to the level of reality on which they are effected. So when the Jew is chosen because of his virtues, it is a reasoned choice, but it is also much more than that; when the "lot" falls on Jacob it is a supra-rational, "arbitrary" choice, but it is also much more than that: ultimately, these are but outward expressions of the ultimate choice that is intrinsic to the divine essence.

This is the deeper significance to King David's words: "G-d... You endorse my lot" (Psalms 16:5). On one level, my relationship with You is based on the arbitrary lot; but You, your very essence, endorses my lot--it is Your

quintessential choice of me which translates into the falling of the lottery in my favor.

*A Roll of Dice*

This explains a curious thing about the most joyous day on the Jewish calendar, the festival of Purim.

Many developments contributed to the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's decree: Esther's replacement of Vashti as queen; Mordechai's rousing of the Jews of Shushan to repentance and prayer; Achashverosh's sleepless night, in which he discovers that Mordechai had saved his life and commands Haman to lead Mordechai in a hero's parade through the streets of Shushan; Esther's petition to the king and her confrontation with Haman; the hanging of Haman; the great war between the Jews and their enemies on the 13th of Adar.

Each of these events played a major role in the miracle of Purim. And yet, the name of the festival--the single word chosen to express its significance--refers to a seemingly minor detail: the fact that Haman selected the date of his proposed annihilation of the Jews by casting lots (*pur* is Persian for "lot"). Obviously, the significance of the lot lies at the very heart of what Purim is all about.

Why, indeed, did Haman cast lots? Why didn't he simply chose the first convenient day or days on which to carry out his evil decree?

But Haman understood that in order to destroy Israel, he must first undermine their status as G-d's chosen people. He also knew that any attempt to discredit their deservedness of this status was doomed to failure. True, they had sinned in bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's image and partaking of Achashverosh's feast, and these sins were what made them vulnerable to his threat in the first place. But are not "even the transgressors of Israel as full of good deeds as a pomegranate is full of seeds"? In the end, they always manage to scrape together enough merits to protect them. And Jews are notorious for repenting their inequities at the eleventh hour and restoring the Almighty's goodwill.

Haman thought of a better way. What was this famous "choice" anyway, but an arbitrary throw of dice? After all, G-d did not pick the Jews because of their Nobel Prize winners and charitable foundations. Is not darkness as light to Him? Is not Grandpa Esau a brother to Jacob? G-d chose them on a whim--perhaps He will unchoose them on a whim as well.

I'm not going to plan this thing rationally, said Haman. I know that going by the regular route I don't stand a chance. Instead, I'll cast it to the blind workings of fate. I'll concentrate on that aspect of reality that transcends

**1965: FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***On The Essence of Choice*

the laws of merit and deficiency. I'll induce that aspect of the divine before which all is equally irrelevant and arbitrary.

Haman cast his lots--"The Lot" as the Book of Esther twice refers to it--and his eyes lit up. The lot had fallen on the month of Adar, the month of Moses' death. This time, thought Haman, the lot has fallen to Esau.

But if Haman reached beyond the most external level of choice to evoke its deeper, "arbitrary" dimension, the Jewish people delved even deeper. For an entire year, every single Jew on earth faced the possibility of death, G-d forbid. As the Book of Esther relates, Haman's decree was never revoked. All King Achashverosh did was to authorize Mordechai and Esther to issue another decree, allowing the Jews, a small minority in a hostile world, to defend themselves against the slaughter that was ordered by Haman's decree. Thus, we celebrate the victory of Purim not on the day that Haman was hanged, but on the day, eleven months later, that followed the miraculous victory of the Jews in their war against those who sought to destroy them.

And yet, despite the death warrant that hung over the head of every Jew, not a single one broke ranks with his people. For an entire year they faced extinction, G-d forbid, rather than renounce their identity. This, in a time of spiritual darkness--for the story of Purim took place at the juncture in history when the era of prophecy was coming to a close, when G-d ceased His open and direct communication with man.

So theirs was not a rational choice of good as perceivably beneficial to life, nor was it an arbitrary, supra-rational toss of a coin (what coin, tossed a million times, will fall a million times on "heads"?). It was an unprecedented assertion of the quintessence of the Jewish soul--of its intrinsic, unequivocal choice of attachment to G-d. It was this expression of our choice, in its freest and most quintessential form, to which G-d responded by expressing the deepest element of His choice of Israel. The lot cast by Haman was now revealed to be but another expression of G-d's love for His people--the lot which selected "the month that was transformed for them from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity."





**1966: EGOISM AND HUMILITY  
ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## The Shrinking of Man

Once upon a time, man was very big. The stars were tiny lights suspended in the "sky," which was a blue, roof-like covering a few hundred miles above his head. The earth on which he stood was about a quarter the size it is today. At the very most, he was aware of the existence of several hundred thousand other human beings (the word "million" wasn't even in his vocabulary). He was obviously the most important thing around--stones were just stones and animals were just animals. It was equally obvious that he stood at the pinnacle of creation and all these other things existed solely to serve his needs.

Over the centuries man shrank. His world grew larger; suddenly, there were all these other people, and all these other species, dwarfing his significance. At the same time, it became tinier and tinier, until it was an infinitesimal speck in a universe of mind-numbing vastness.

Did man become humbler? Did we become less infatuated with self? Interestingly enough, the shrinking of man had the very opposite effect. Ideals such as devotion and sacrifice became "human weaknesses." Pride, once a sin, became a mark of psychological health. People started asking whether greed was indeed inferior to virtue, until greed became a virtue, ending the argument. Why is it that the more we came to appreciate our insignificance, the more selfish we became?

Upon closer examination, this is no paradox. The person who sees himself as the kingpin of creation, as something of paramount importance to the grand divine plan, is driven to fill that role and serve that plan; the person who believes that everything exists to serve his existence is certain that his existence serves a purpose beyond mere existence.

On the other hand, if man is insignificant, then he serves no higher purpose. "I am nothing" can be just another way of saying, "There's nothing but me."

This is not to say that the person who sees himself as the center of creation is not susceptible to egoism and self-aggrandizement. Nor is it to say that feelings of inconsequentiality will never be accompanied by altruistic behavior. The point is that feelings of insignificance do not make a person selfless--indeed, the most virulent forms of egomania derive from a lack of self-worth. Conversely, a sense of self-worth can be the source of either arrogance or humility--depending on how a person regards his worth.

The difference, says Chassidic master Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, is the difference between two alephs. In the opening verse of the book of Chronicles, the name "Adam" is written in the Torah with an oversize aleph; in the opening verse of Leviticus, the word *vayikra*, which refers to G-d's calling to Moses, is spelled with a miniature aleph.

Adam and Moses were both great men, and both were cognizant of their greatness. Adam was the "handiwork of G-d" fashioned after "the divine image." His sense of himself as the crown of G-d's creation is led to his downfall, when he understood this to mean that nothing is beyond his ken.

Moses was well aware of the fact that, of all G-d's creations, he was the only one to whom G-d spoke "face to face"; he knew that it was to and through him that G-d communicated His wisdom and will to His world. But rather than the inflated aleph of Adam, this knowledge evoked in him the self-effacing aleph of *Vayikra*. Moses felt diminished by his gifts, humbled by the awesome responsibility of proving equal to them. As the Torah attests, "Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth"--not despite but because of his greatness.

Ancient man was both blessed and cursed by the prevailing evidence of his greatness. Modern man is both blessed and cursed by the increasing evidence of his smallness. Our challenge is to avail ourselves of both blessings: to couple our knowledge of how small we truly are with our sense of how great we can truly be. To become humbly great, which is the greatest kind of humility there is.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
rendered by Yanki Tauber editor@chabadonline.com*

**1967: THE REBBE AND THE HOLY LAND**

## My Encounter With The Rebbe

*Translated from the Hebrew weekly Kfar Chabad.*

My second encounter with the Rebbe was in June of 1967, shortly before the outbreak of the Six Day War.

Spurred by the drama of the Cuban Missile Crisis and a young man's desire to be a player on the international scene, I decided to major in political science and pursue a career in the diplomatic corps. 1967 found me an up-and-coming diplomatic aide, on the staff of the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg.

In the first week of June I received a call from a cousin of mine. In an anxious voice, she asked that I stop by at her apartment after work. As I sat in their living room that evening, she and her husband told me the cause of their distress. Their only child, Abraham--a young man several years my junior who had become a baal t'shuvah (a "returnee" to Torah observance) the year before--was studying at a Lubavitcher yeshivah in Israel. Alarmed by the increasing talk of war, they sent him a plane ticket and begged him to come home. Abraham remains adamant in his refusal: the Lubavitcher Rebbe says to stay.

"We tried to approach the Rebbe," my cousin continued. "We wanted to explain to him that Abraham is our only child, that he is our entire life, and to appeal to him to please allow Abraham to return home. But it seems that one must wait several months for an audience with the Rebbe. We wrote him a letter, as his secretaries advised, and received this as a reply." She showed me a short note with the sentence, "The Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers." She seemed little eased by the quote from Psalms.

"Tell us, Joe," my cousin asked, "What's really going on? You have the inside story. Is Israel in any real danger?"

I didn't want to add to their distress, but I felt duty-bound to tell them the truth: the State of Israel is indeed in grave danger. War is all but certain. The Arab states have mobilized forces far superior to Israel's and stand a good chance of defeating the tiny Jewish state; if this happens, I didn't want to imagine the fate of the Jews residing there. My boss, Mr. Goldberg, a deeply

committed Jew, cannot sleep at night. "I cannot emphasize enough how serious the situation is," I concluded. "We must get Abraham out of there at once!"

"But how?" cried my cousin. "To him, the Rebbe's word is law. If the Rebbe says to stay, he'll stay!"

"Listen," I said, "I'll speak with the Rebbe. When I introduce myself as Mr. Goldberg's aide, I'm sure to be received immediately. I am certain that I will succeed in persuading him to allow Abraham to come home."

The next morning I contacted the Rebbe's personal secretary, Rabbi Hadakov. I introduced myself as a member of the United States delegation to the U.N. and said that I had an "urgent matter" to discuss with the Rebbe. Rabbi Hadakov promised to contact me shortly. A half-hour later he called back to inform me that the Rebbe would see me the following night at 2:00 a.m. "But you don't understand," I objected, "this is urgent!" "Because it is urgent," came the reply, "I have arranged for you to be received by the Rebbe tomorrow night."

There was more white in the beard, but otherwise the youthful face and manner had changed little. The same noble countenance, the same penetrating eyes gazed at me from across the desk that 2:00 a.m. thirteen years after my bar mitzvah visit.

The handshake was firm and warm. "I have already had the privilege of meeting the Rebbe," I began, "Grandfather brought me before my bar mitzvah." The Rebbe's broad smile assured me that he indeed remembered me.

"I must apologize to the Rebbe," I went on. "I'm afraid that I used my position rather unjustly to gain this audience. The 'urgent matter' I spoke of is a personal one."

Again, the Rebbe's warm smile put me at ease. Encouraged, I told the Rebbe about my cousins and their son. "The parents are beside themselves with anxiety." I concluded. "They would greatly appreciate it if the Rebbe would allow their only child to come home until the danger blows over."

The warm smile had disappeared. A grave expression now cloaked the Rebbe's features. "I have thousands of only children in the Land of Israel," said the Rebbe. "If I tell them to remain there, it is because I am certain that no harm shall befall them. Tell your cousin and her husband that they can put their fears to rest. The Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. G-d watches over His people wherever they are, and especially in the Holy Land."

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*My Encounter With The Rebbe*

"Rebbe," I said, "with all due respect, they cannot put their fears to rest. Neither can I. Perhaps the Rebbe is unaware of the gravity of the situation, but because of my position I am privy to extremely reliable information. Unfortunately, as we speak, the state of Israel is in grave danger."

"Israel," said the Rebbe with absolute conviction, "is not in grave danger. She stands on the threshold of a great victory. With the Almighty's help, this month shall be a month of great miracles for the Jewish nation."

"Now," continued the Rebbe, "If you don't mind, I would like to request something of you. Tell Abraham's father that he, too, can do something for our brethren in the Land of Israel: tell him that I request that he begin observing the mitzvah of donning tefillin every weekday. I ask that you, too, should begin the daily observance of this mitzvah. I don't know how much you can help Israel in your capacity as an assistant to the U.N. Ambassador, but with your daily donning of tefillin you will certainly contribute to Israel's victory---without," added the Rebbe with a slight smile "encountering any complications of 'divided loyalties'..."

"One more thing. When all this will be resolved, with G-d's help, in a most positive manner, I would like to speak with you again."

I don't know how long I stood there, staring at the Rebbe, unable to utter a sound. Awestruck by the man seated across the desk from me---by the incredible confidence he exudes, by the tremendous responsibility he assumes upon himself. At that moment I understood how so many thousands place their lives in his hands and unquestionably obey his every word.

"Rebbe," I said spontaneously, and with deep emotion, "as a Jew, I am grateful that we have someone like you in these difficult and terrifying times. Thank you for the time you devoted to me."

"May we soon hear good tidings," said the Rebbe.

Several days later the world held its breath. Israel, fighting for her life on three fronts, defeated her attackers in six fleeting days, in a victory unprecedented in military history. I sat with Mr. Goldberg in

his office at the U.N. as the image of the liberated Western Wall appeared on the television. We saw Rabbi Goren sounding the shofar and the soldiers weeping on the Wall's stones. Mr. Goldberg and myself could not contain our tears. Everyone in the office, Jew and non-Jew alike, sensed that a great moment in Jewish history was unfolding before their eyes.

I remembered the Rebbe's request and phoned Rabbi Hadakov to arrange for an audience. A week later, I again stood in the Rebbe's room. If I expected an air of celebration and a tinge of "I told you so" in his smile, I was surprised to find the Rebbe in an extremely grave mood. After a welcoming handshake he came straight to the point.

"This is a great and awesome moment in the history of the Jewish nation. Our history is a chain of miracles -- our very existence is an ongoing miracle -- but only rarely are they as openly manifest as they were last week. Only rarely does the Almighty show Himself to the entire world and so openly proclaim the eternity of His people. Such a moment was the Exodus from Egypt, so it was on a few other occasions, and so it was last week.

"There are times when G-d hides His face from us. But there are also times when He shows Himself in all His glory and showers us with kindness and miracles. We now find ourselves in such a time.

"G-d, who created and rules the universe, gave the Land of Israel to the people of Israel. For a time -- for a very long time -- He took the land from us and gave it to others. Last week, He took it away from them and gave it back to us. To remove any doubt that it was indeed G-d who restored the land to us, He did so with an open display of divine power, as the entire world watched and wondered how Israel would persevere in the face of the many and mighty enemies who wished to destroy her.

"However," continued the Rebbe, "man has been granted freedom of choice. We can seize this moment, or, G-d forbid, reject this divine gift. There are two things we must avoid at all costs. The first is not to fall into the trap of attributing this victory to our own military prowess. Our army and arms were but the tool through which G-d channeled His miracles. This victory, which defied all natural norms, was achieved by the Almighty and by Him alone.

"The second thing is where you can play a significant part," said the Rebbe, giving me the full benefit of his penetrating gaze, "and this is why I have asked

**1967: THE REBBE AND THE HOLY LAND**

## My Encounter With The Rebbe

you to come see me. Unfortunately, many Jews, including those who head the government of Israel, have yet to free themselves of their intimidation before 'world opinion.' I expect that they will lose no time in dispatching all sorts of delegations to Washington with the message that they are prepared to return the territory conquered in the war. They do not understand that they have not 'conquered' anything themselves -- that G-d has granted the people of Israel their eternal heritage amidst tremendous miracles. We must prevent them from making this drastic error."

I spoke for the first time since entering the Rebbe's room. "What can I do about this?"

"You meet with the Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. and with many other key Israeli officials. You have connections in the State Department and you will know if and when such initiatives are put forth by Israel. My request to you is this: when you discern a weakening of resolve on the part of the Israeli government to retain the liberated territories, repeat to them what has been said here."

The Rebbe immediately sensed the objection that was forming in my mind. "I'm not suggesting that you use your position to in any way to counteract the interests of the United States Government, which you are duty-bound to serve. But, first of all, the United States has no interest that Israel retreat from the liberated territories -- quite the contrary. Secondly, as a Jew and as a private citizen, you have every right to express your views."

Then the Rebbe said to me, his voice choked with emotion: "And if they ask you: What gives you the confidence to speak this way? On what basis do you presume to know what is good for Israel and what is not? Tell them about the only child whose parents feared for his life and wished to bring him back to the States. Tell them how, from this room, it was promised to him, and to thousands of other only children, that there is nothing to fear and that all will end well. And on what basis was this promise made from this room? On the basis that our world has a creator and master, and that the Creator decided to give the Land of Israel to the people of Israel! On the basis that when the Creator of the world gives us a gift, we must treasure

it and defend it, and not look for ways to rid ourselves of it!"

I left the Rebbe's room in turmoil. Some would describe my encounter with the Rebbe as a "spiritual experience," but these words fail to convey the utter transformation I underwent that night. My half-hour in the Rebbe's room shook my sense of Jewish identity to its very foundations and completely rearranged the points of reference in my life. For the second time in as many weeks the thought formed in my mind: Fortunate is the nation that has the Lubavitcher Rebbe as its own.

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See also EYES UPON THE LAND  
<http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=67798>



### 1968: RELIGIOSITY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## How Pious Should You Be?

"You're holy, but you stink." That's what the village children would yell at the *bechor* (first-born animal) who would often be seen wandering about the shtetl.

(According to Torah law, the firstborn young of a kosher domestic animal must be brought as an offering in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Even when conditions do not allow this--as has been the case since the Temple's destruction more than 1900 years ago--the firstborn animal retains its sacred status, and it is forbidden to eat it or make use of it in any way. In the shtetl, where raising a few head of cattle or a small herd of goats was common practice, these animals would run loose, getting into everything and wreaking general havoc. And since they could not be shorn or groomed, their stench was quite unbearable).

The lesson in this is that something holy can also stink. You might be this really pious guy, but if people hold their noses when you walk by, you're doing *something* wrong. In the words of one of the greatest sages in Jewish history, Rabbi Judah HaNassi: "Which is the right path for a person to choose for himself? What is harmonious for the one who does it, and harmonious for one's fellow man."

In the 29th chapter of Genesis we read of Jacob's marriages to Leah and Rachel.

Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, the younger of his uncle Laban's two daughters. Laban agrees to give him Rachel's hand in marriage in return for seven years' labor. Jacob keeps his side of the bargain, but Laban tricks him: the veiled bride given to Jacob is Rachel's older sister, Leah, and Jacob discovers the deception only the next morning. Laban agrees to let him marry Rachel, too, in return for another seven years of shepherding his flocks.

Marrying more than one wife was common practice

in biblical times, and permissible under Jewish law until a rabbinical ordinance forbade it about one thousand years ago. But the Torah expressly forbids to marry two sisters. And while the laws of the Torah were officially commanded to Jewish people at Mount Sinai many years after Jacob's marriages, the Talmud tells us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob observed the Torah even before it was decreed at Sinai. So why did Jacob marry two sisters, contrary to the code of behavior he had accepted upon himself?

This question is asked by many of the Torah commentaries, and many interesting and innovative explanations are given. The Lubavitcher Rebbe discusses several of these explanations, raises some legal objections to each of them, and then offers a profoundly simple explanation of his own: Jacob married Rachel because he had promised her that he would.

To accept upon yourself a moral standard beyond what is required by law, explains the Rebbe, is a noble and desirable thing--as long it only involves a sacrifice on *your* part. But if your pious conduct also imposes hardship and suffering on others, you must then ask yourself: what right do I have to aspire to greater spiritual merit at another's expense?

Not to marry Rachel, after she had waited seven years in promise of a life together, would have caused her grievous hurt and insult. (To divorce Leah, in addition to the hurt and insult to her this would have involved, would not have solved the problem--the Torah's prohibition against marrying two sisters applies also to the sister of one's living divorcee). Since Jacob was not *obligated* to obey the biblical prohibition against marrying two sisters, he had no right to accept upon himself a higher set of values if it was at the expense of another human being.

How pious should you be? As pious as you can. As long as it's only you who's paying the price.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com);  
based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

## 1969: LASER BEAMS ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Rules

Before you switch on your laser printer, read this:

A laser is a device that produces an intense beam of light of a very pure single color. This beam can be made potent enough to vaporize a diamond, and precise enough to deposit a dot of ink 1/600th of an inch across in exact juxtaposition with tens of thousands of similar dots to produce your office memo in 12 pt. Times New Roman (captions in 14 pt Arial Narrow). Even more precise (and more expensive) are devices that yield a beam exact enough to perform eye surgery.

A laser beam is a beam of optic light---basically the same light produced by the flashlight you keep in the glove compartment of your car. The difference is that while the excited atoms in your flashlight bulb each emit light independently of each other and in many different wavelengths, a laser device stimulates a great number of atoms to is emit light in a single frequency and in step with each other, thereby producing a light beam of great potency and accuracy.

As a rule, people don't like rules. We don't like being told that a food palatable to our taste buds is unhealthy for our body. We don't like being told that something desirous to ourselves is hurtful to another person. We don't like being told that a convenient habit is damaging to our environment. In other words, we don't like being told what to do. We don't like restrictions.

When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were told that, in seven weeks' time, they will be given the Torah. They were so excited that they literally counted the days. At Mount Sinai, their souls flew from their bodies in ecstasy when they heard G-d proclaim the Ten Commandments.

On the face of it, their joy seems somewhat misplaced. After all, these were a people just emerging from several generations of slavery. The last thing they would want--one assumes--is a set of restrictions on their lives. Basically, that's what the Torah is. Seven of the Ten Commandments are "Thou Shalt Not"s, as are 365 out of the Torah 613 mitzvot (the rest are "Thou Shall"s).

But the Jews wanted the Torah. The Midrash relates how G-d went to all the nations of the world asking them if they want a copy. "What does the Torah contain?" they asked. "Thou shalt not..." said G-d and was met with a no-thank-you almost before He could finish the sentence. The Jews, however, understood that this was no ordinary set of rules: this was a life regulator designed by the One who invented life and knows how it is best applied.

At Sinai, all the peoples of the world were given a choice. Take box A, and you get a life that expends its energies every which way, in whatever color or frequency that strikes your fancy at any given moment. It'll even be able to do many useful things, like projecting animal shapes on the wall of a darkened room or finding those car keys you dropped in the bushes. Take box B, and you get a life that focuses its energies on the purpose to which it was created.

Many took the flashlight. We opted for the laser.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com);  
Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

1970: TIME MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Life On The Inside

How often, arriving at yet another of life's stations, do we tell ourselves, "Ok, now it begins; now it's for real" ?

When we'll graduate High School -- that's when life begins. Then we realize that, no, first we have to get our degree, first we need to get married, but then our married friends smile and say, "This is nothing, this is just playing house, wait till your first child is born, then you'll understand what life is about." But we're still working to get our career off the ground, and when that's achieved we realize that the really serious plans will have to wait until the kids are grown up and on their own, and then it's just a matter of getting through those years left till retirement so that we can get down to business.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once held a *farbrengen* (chassidic gathering) in honor of a group of chassidim who were returning that night to their homes in Israel. As the evening progressed, so did the frequency at which some of the attendees were glancing at the clock on the wall. Their plane was due to take off in a few hours, and they still had to pack and take care of other last minute business. Noticing their anxiety, the Rebbe smiled and told the following story:

It was in the mid 1920's, in the darkest days of the Bolshevik attempt to uproot the Jewish faith in Soviet Russia. The Rebbe's father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, who headed the underground network devoted to keeping Yiddishkeit alive, was being watched constantly by the Yevsektzia and NKVD and followed wherever he went. Everyone knew that it was only a matter of time before they would pounce on their prey.

"Late one night," the Rebbe related, "I entered my father-in-law's study in his Leningrad apartment. For several hours, he had been receiving people in *yechidut* (private audience held between Rebbe and chassid) -- a physically and spiritually draining task for a Rebbe. In another half-hour or so, he was scheduled to leave for the train station, where he was going to catch a

train to Moscow for a meeting with a foreign businessman for the purpose of acquiring funds to support his work. Needless to say, to meet with a foreign citizen, a 'capitalist' at that, and especially for the above purposes, was extremely dangerous; in those days, many forfeited their lives for far lesser 'crimes'.

"To my great surprise, I found my father-in-law working calmly at his desk, arranging his papers, as if it were the middle of an ordinary workday. There was no sign of the strain of several hours of listening to people's most personal and painful dilemmas, and no sign of the fact that in another half-hour he would be leaving for the station on his dangerous mission.

"I could not contain myself and asked him: 'I know that Chabad Chassidism is predicated on the principle that "the mind rules the heart." I know what sort of education you received and how you were trained in self-sacrifice for Jews and Judaism. But to such an extent? That you could sit at your desk at a time like this, as if there were nothing else on your schedule?'"

In reply, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak said to his son-in-law: "We cannot make our days longer, nor can we add additional hours to our nights. But we can maximize our usage of time by regarding each segment of time as a world of its own. When we devote a portion of time -- whether it is an hour, a day or a minute -- to a certain task, we should be totally invested in what we are doing, as if there exists nothing else in the world."

Chabad-Chassidic teaching devotes much discussion to the quality of *penimiyut*. Amongst Chassidim, the greatest compliment one can pay a person is to say that he is a *penimi* -- one who possesses the trait of *penimiyut*. The greatest insult is to call someone a *chitzon*, which is to say that he lacks *penimiyut*.

What is *penimiyut*? The closest equivalent word in the English language is "innerness". *Penimiyut* means integrity, thoroughness and consistency. It is the opposite of superficiality and equivocation. In the *penimi*, knowledge cannot be divorced from experience, and knowledge and experience cannot be divorced from deed. You will never encounter only parts of the *penimi* -- his brain, his heart, his actions; rather, you will always find the complete person there. The *penimi* doesn't merely think a thought, experience a feeling, do an action -- he lives them.

When the *penimi* devotes a portion of time --

**1970: TIME MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO  
THE REBBE**

## Life On The Inside

whether it is an hour, a day or a minute -- to a certain task, he is totally invested in what he is doing, as if there exists nothing else in the world.

This is not to say that the *penimi* lives indiscriminately. On the contrary, indiscrimination is the ultimate mark of the *chitzon*. The *penimi* is deeply aware -- aware of the differences between important things and things of lesser importance, between means and ends, between journeys and destinations. But in whatever he is involved, he is fully there. He's never just "getting it done" or "getting it over with". When he's on the way to something, he's fully invested in being on the way to something.

The Torah reading of Massei (Numbers 33-36) includes Moses' record of the Israelites' 42 "journeys" through the desert -- forty-two journeys which, according to rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, are replayed in every individual's personal journey through life.

The 42 journeys are, of course, phases and stages in a greater Journey -- the progress from the confines to Egypt to the Promised Land. But each is also an entity unto itself -- the Torah calls them "journeys" (*masaot*), not "stations". We're not here to get through life, the Torah is telling us; we're here to live it.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com);  
based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*



## 1971: PERSONAL PROPERTY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### Tom's House and Harry's Car

Chassidim like to tell the story about a certain individual who was flippant with his financial obligations. It reached the point that his debtors felt they had no recourse but to inform their rebbe of the situation. The Chassidic sage summoned the man and asked him: "Is it true what they tell me -- that you borrow money and don't repay, that you buy on credit and then evade payment?"

"But Rebbe!" exclaimed the chassid. "Haven't you taught us that the world is nothing, material cares are nothing, money is nothing? Why are they making a fuss about a few rubles? It's all nothing!"

"In that case," said the rebbe, "how about if we take this 'nothing' " -- and here the rebbe pointed to the body of the spiritual fellow -- "and we stretch it out upon this 'nothing' (the table), and with this 'nothing' (his belt) administer a dozen lashes to the first 'nothing'?"

Behind this humorous story lies a serious question. If, as the Psalmist proclaims, "The world, and all it contains, is G-d's", is there, in fact, such a thing as "theft"? Can something that does not, in truth, belong to you, be taken from you?

Of course, G-d said "You shall not steal." Those are the rules of the game. But maybe that's what it is -- a game. G-d is saying: "Let's make believe that this house belongs to Tom. And let's make believe that this car belongs to Harry. Now, Harry, you mustn't burn down 'Tom's house'. And Tom, you're not allowed to use 'Harry's car' without his permission." Is that what it amounts to?

According to the Midrash, the Third Commandment, "You shall not take G-d's name in vain", and the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not steal", are one and the same. Indeed, the Torah (in Leviticus 5:20) refers to financial fraud as "a betrayal of G-d". "Because" explains the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Akiva, "in defrauding his fellow, he is defrauding the Third Party to their dealings."

On the face of it, this can be understood along the lines of our "rules of the game" thesis. The problem with stealing is not that a certain person's "ownership" has been violated (since everything belongs to G-d anyway), but that the divine command "You shall not steal" has been transgressed.

But if that were the case, asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe, why does Rabbi Akiva describe G-d as "the Third Party to their dealings"? Isn't He the only party? Aren't we say-

ing that it's G-d's car that's been stolen, and the fact that He chose to register it in Harry's name is basically irrelevant?

But Rabbi Akiva is being consistent. Remember the verse "The world, and all it contains, is G-d's"? Rabbi Akiva, quoting this verse in the Talmud, interprets it to be saying, "He acquired, and bequeathed, and rules His world." What does this mean? Isn't it G-d's world because He created it? And if He "bequeathed" it, than it's not His anymore!

What Rabbi Akiva is saying, explains the Rebbe, is this: Obviously, it's His because He created it. But then He desired to make it His in a deeper and more meaningful way -- by bequeathing it to man.

To own a world because you made it is basically meaningless. In human terms, that's like dreaming up a life and trying to derive satisfaction from your own fantasy. For something to be real for us, it has to have existence outside of ourselves. To derive pleasure from something, we have to share its existence with others.

G-d desired to derive pleasure from His world. That's why He gave it to us, and asked us to share it with Him.

That's why He said: "Tom, this is your house. I mean it -- it is really and truly yours. Now this is what I would like you to do with it. I want you to put mezuzot -- little scrolls inscribed with the main points of your relationship with Me -- on its doorposts. I want its kitchen to be kosher. I want it to be a place that shelters a moral family life, a place in which hospitality is extended to the needy, a place where My Torah is studied.

"Of course, I could just put you in this house and tell you to do all this, without really giving it to you. But then you'd be doing all these things mechanically, like a robot. Deep down, you would sense that it's not really your home, that the things you're doing are not really your achievement. And then it wouldn't ever be truly My home, either. It would just be something I made up.

"That's why I gave it to you. You sense it to be yours because it really is. You experience what you make of it to be your own achievement because it really is. And when you choose, with the free will that I have granted you, to invite Me into your home and make Me at home in it, it will become truly mine, too, in the manner that I desire it to be mine.

"And please, don't steal Harry's car. Because I have a stake in every financial transaction that occurs between the two of you. When you deprive Harry of the ownership that I have given him over his piece of My world, you are depriving Me as well. You are making My ownership of My world all but meaningless."

## 1972: AGING AND RETIREMENT ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### Growing Old

The Torah considers old age a virtue and a blessing. Throughout the Torah, "old" (*zakein*) is synonymous with "wise"; the Torah commands us to respect all elderly, regardless of their scholarship and piety, because the many trials and experiences that each additional year of life brings yield a wisdom which the most accomplished young prodigy cannot equal. It describes Abraham as one who "grew old and came along in days" (Genesis 24:1)--his accumulated days, each replete with learning and achievement, meant that with each passing day his worth increased. Thus, a ripe old age is regarded as one of the greatest blessings to be bestowed upon man.

This is in marked contrast to the prevalent attitude in the "developed" countries of today's world. In the 20th-century western world, old age is a liability. Youth is seen as the highest credential in every field from business to government, where a younger generation insists on "learning from their own mistakes" rather than building upon the life experience of their elders. At 50, a person is considered "over the hill" and is already receiving hints that his position would be better filled by someone twenty-five years his junior; in many companies and institutions, retirement is mandatory by age 65 or earlier.

Thus society dictates that one's later years be marked by inactivity and decline. The aged are made to feel that they are useless if not a burden, and had best confine themselves to retirement villages and nursing homes. After decades of achievement, their knowledge and talent are suddenly worthless; after decades of contributing to society, they are suddenly undeserving recipients, grateful for every time the younger generation takes off from work and play to drop by for a half-hour chat and the requisite Father's Day necktie.

On the surface, the modern-day attitude seems at least partly justified. Is it not a fact that a person physically weakens as he advances in years? True, the inactivity of retirement has been shown to be a key factor in the deterioration of the elderly; but is it still not an inescapable fact of nature that the body of a 70-year-old is not the body of a 30-year-old?

But this, precisely, is the point: is a person's worth to be measured by his physical prowess? By the number of man-hours and inter-continental flights that can be extracted from him per week? What is at issue here is more than the disenfranchisement of an entire segment of the population whose only crime is that they were born a decade or two earlier than the rest; our attitude toward the aged reflects our very conception of "value." If a person's physical strength has waned while his sagacity and insight have grown, do we view this as an improvement or a decline? If a person's output has diminished in quantity but has increased in quality, has his net worth risen or fallen?

Indeed, a twenty-year-old can dance the night away while his grandmother tires after a few minutes. But man was not created to dance for hours on end. Man was created to make life on earth purer, brighter and holier than it was before he came on the scene. Seen in this light, the spiritual maturity of the aged more than compensates for their lessened physical strength; indeed, the diminution of one's physical drives can be even utilized as a spiritual asset, as it allows a positive reordering of priorities that is much more difficult in one's youth when the quest for material gains is at its height.

Certainly, the physical health of the body affects one's productivity. Life is a marriage of body and soul, and is at its most productive when nurtured by a sound physique as well as a healthy spirit. But the effects of the aging process upon a person's productivity are largely determined by the manner in which he regards this marriage and partnership. Which is the means and which is the end? If the soul is nothing more than an engine to drive the body's procurement of its needs and aims, then the body's physical weakening with age brings with it a spiritual deterioration as well---a descent into boredom, futility and despair. But when one regards the body as an accessory to the soul, the very opposite is true: the spiritual growth of old age invigorates the body, enabling one to lead a productive existence for as long as the Almighty grants one the gift of life.

#### Life: A Definition

But there is more to it than that. There is more to the difference between the Torah's perspective on old age and that of the modern world than the classic dichotomy between body and soul, more than the question of material versus spiritual priority.

At the basis of the institution of retirement is the notion that life is composed of productive and non-productive periods. The first 20-30 years of life are

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seen as a time of little or no achievement, as a person acquires knowledge and training in preparation for the productive period of life. The next 30-40 years are the time in which his or her creative energies are realized; he now returns what has been invested in him by his now passive elders, and invests, in turn, in the still passive younger generation. Finally, as he enters his "twilight years," he puts his period of "real" achievement behind him; he has worked hard "all his life," so he now ought to settle down and enjoy the fruits of his labors. If the creative urge still agitates his aging body, he is advised to find some harmless hobby with which to fill his time. Indeed, time is now something to be "filled" and gotten over with as he whiles away his days on life's sidelines, his knowledge and abilities filed away in the attic of old age. He has now returned full circle to his childhood: once again he is a passive recipient in a world shaped and run by the initiative of others.

Torah, however, recognizes no such distinction between life's phases, for it sees productivity as the very essence of life: the words "a non-productive life-period" are an oxymoron. There are marked differences between childhood, adulthood, etc., but these differ in the manner, not the fact, of a person's productivity. Retirement and the passive enjoyment of the fruits of one's labor also have their time and place--in the World To Come. In the words of the Talmud, "Today, is the time to do; tomorrow, to reap the reward." The very fact that G-d has granted a person a single additional day of bodily life means that he has not yet concluded his mission in life, that there is still something for him to achieve in this world.

Thus, the aphorism "Man is born to toil" (Job 5:7) expresses a most basic fact of human nature. A person experiences true satisfaction only from something he has earned by his own effort and initiative; undeserved gifts and handouts ("the bread of shame" in Kabbalistic terminology) are unfulfilling and dehumanizing. As the Talmud observes, "A person would rather a single measure of his own grain than nine measures of his fellow's."

A working adult, burdened by the demands of life,

may nostalgically reminisce on his childhood "paradise" as a time of freedom from responsibility and toil. As a child, however, he disdained such paradise, desiring only to do something real and creative. Challenge a child with responsibility, and he'll flourish; cast him as a passive, unproductive recipient of "education," and he'll grow despondent and rebellious. For the child, too, is alive, and as such craves achievement; from the moment of birth he is already actively influencing his surroundings, if only by stimulating his parents with his thirst for knowledge and affection.

The same is true of adults of all ages. The promise of a "happy retirement" is a cruel myth: the very nature of human life is that man knows true happiness only when creatively contributing to the world he inhabits. The weakened physical state of old age (or illness, G-d forbid) is not a sentence of inactivity, but a challenge to find new--and superior--venues of achievement.

### Why

Indeed, such is human nature: life has meaning only when it is productive. But why? Why was the human being so constructed?

Because G-d created man to be His partner in creation.

The Midrash tells us that "G-d says to the righteous: 'Just as I am a creator of worlds, you, too, should do so.'" The Midrash also recounts an exchange between a Greek philosopher and talmudic sage Rabbi Hoshiah: "If circumcision is desirable to G-d," asked the Western thinker, "why didn't He create Adam circumcised?" Replied Rabbi Hoshiah: "Everything that was created in the six days of creation requires adjustment and improvement by man: the mustard seed must be sweetened, wheat must be milled..." G-d specifically created an unfinished world for man to develop and perfect.

G-d is the ultimate initiator and giver, granting us existence and life and equipping us with faculties and resources. But G-d wanted more than passive recipients of His gifts. He wanted a partnership with us--a partnership in which we would create and give as He creates and gives, and He would receive from us as we receive from Him. So He made the drive for achievement the very essence of human life.

### A Course of Action

The sad fact remains, however, that retirement, mandatory or otherwise, is a fact of modern living. Year after year, it destroys millions of lives and condemns invaluable human resources (indeed, the most valuable human resources we possess as a race) to

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complete or near-complete waste. What is one to do in face of this human and social tragedy? Should one embark on a campaign to change this practice and the value system that lies behind it? Should one look for the brighter side of retirement and seek to utilize its positive aspects?

Indeed, we must do both. We must change the attitudes of the leaders of the business and professional worlds, and of society as a whole. Most of all, we must change the self-perception of the aged (and the near-aged, and the near-near-aged) themselves. We must tell them: You are not useless; on the contrary, you are a greater asset to society than ever before, and with each passing day and experience your value increases. The life-changes you are experiencing as a result of your advancing years are not a cause for retirement from productive life, but the opportunity to discover new and more meaningful ways to develop yourself and your surroundings. Long life is a divine gift, and the Almighty has certainly supplied you with the tools to optimally realize it.

At the same time, we must exploit the opportunities that the institution of retirement presents us. If there are countless retired men and women desperately seeking ways to fill their time, let us establish for them centers of Torah study, where they can drop in for several hours a day and increase their knowledge and productivity. Let us open such centers in every community and set up classes and workshops in every nursing home. If the struggles of the workplace prevented many from acquiring the Torah's illuminating perspective on life in their younger years, retirement provides a golden opportunity to learn and grow: education, like productivity, is a life-long endeavor.

Torah will give them a new lease on life. It will enlighten them to their true worth and potential, and transform them from futile has-beens into beacons of light for their families and communities. Retirement, if utilized properly, can be directed as the most potent force toward its ultimate eradication from the mind and life of man.

*Editor's note: This essay is based on talks delivered by the Rebbe on his 70th birthday, Nissan 11, 5732 (March 26, 1972), and ten years later on his 80th*

*birthday. On both these occasions, the Rebbe received tens of thousands of letters from well-wishers across the globe; among these were several that suggested that perhaps it is time he considered "slowing down" and "taking it easy" after his many fruitful decades as a leader and activist. The Rebbe's response was the blistering attack on the very concept of "retirement" articulated here.*

*The Rebbe also addressed the issue on several other occasions, including a series of Shabbat gatherings in the summer of 1980. He then called for the establishment of Torah-study centers for the aged. Hundreds of such study centers--named, at the Rebbe's suggestion, **Tiferet Zkeinim** ("the glory of the aged")--have since been founded in every corner of the globe by the Rebbe's emissaries. Elements of these talks, as well as several other talks in which the Rebbe discussed the concept of "life as productivity," have also been incorporated in this essay.*

*The Rebbe himself was a chief exemplar of the Torah perspective on "retirement" he expounded. He celebrated his 70th birthday by initiating the establishment of 71 new educational and social institutions, virtually doubling the Chabad-Lubavitch worldwide outreach network. On his 80th birthday, he again called for a massive expansion of Chabad's activities in a six-hour address that ended after 3:00 am., following which the Rebbe proceeded to personally distribute a gift--a special edition of the chassidic classic, the **Tanya**--to each of the 10,000 men, women and children present, the last participant receiving his **Tanya** at 6:15am.*

*While the Rebbe had a most impressive list of achievements behind him when he was advised to begin to "enjoy the fruits of his labors" upon his attainment of age 70 in 1972, these pale in comparison with what he had achieved by age 80, which, in turn, are a fraction of the breath and scope of his activities at age 90. Each year brought the revelation of new dimensions to his philosophy and world-outlook, new campaigns and initiatives, new Chabad centers, schools and communities the world over. Also in the years 1992 to 1994, while physically disabled by the massive stroke he suffered in March of 1992, he continued to lead the Chabad movement, issuing directives to his 3,000 emissaries on six continents and the many thousands who turned to him for guidance and direction.*

*Based on the talks and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review*

**1973: ANXIETY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Sharing The Workload

In every venture, divide the workload between yourself and your Partner Above. The dividing line depends on the sort of venture.

In material matters, it is that point at which you become emotionally obsessed. Up until there, do your job as best you know how. Anything necessary past that line is best left in His trust.

In spiritual matters, take whatever He gives you and charge it with all you've got.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
(TFreeman@Chabadonline.com)*



**1974: A MITZVAH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Mitzvah Tanks*

In 1974, a new apparition began to make its appearance in the streets of Manhattan. Even in that hubbub of crowd and clamor, this strange vehicle attracted attention.

It was a standard van of the "U-Haul" or "Ryder" variety. Its back door was rolled up, showing a cargo of one large wooden table, two wooden benches, and a dozen young men with beards and black hats. From a loudspeaker taped to its roof issued forth a medley of Chassidic songs played on high volume—that is, high enough to make itself heard above the din of a Manhattan street corner. Large posters taped to the sides of the moving van proclaimed: "MITZVAH TANK", "Tefillin on board" and "Mitzvot On The Spot For People On The Go."

The Rebbe had sent his tanks into the battle for the soul of the American Jew.

If a large part of American Jewry had ceased to come to shul each morning to don tefillin and pray, the Rebbe was going to bring the tefillin to them. He was going to send one of his students to stop the American Jew on a city sidewalk. "Excuse me, sir," the lad would say. "Are you Jewish?" If the answer is affirmative, the young man would continue: "Would you like to put on tefillin today? It's a mitzvah." The American Jew will be invited to step up onto the truck, roll up his left sleeve, bind the tefillin to his arm and head and recite a short prayer.

If the American Jew is a she, she would be offered a free kit containing a small tin candlestick, a candle, and a brochure with all the information necessary to light Shabbat Candles that Friday evening—the proper time (18 minutes before sunset), the blessings in Hebrew and English, and a short message on the importance of ushering Shabbat into her home. He or she would also be offered literature on the Rebbe's other "mitzvah campaigns" or assistance in anything from having a mezuzah checked to finding Jewish school for their child.

Eventually, the Ryder vans were replaced with mobile homes equipped with shelves for books and

comfortable seating for a quick discussion or even an impromptu class. But the concept remained the same: Go out there and get a Jew to do a mitzvah.

"Mitzvah" means "commandment". A mitzvah is one of the 613 divine instructions to the Jew contained in the Torah. The word also means "connection": a deed that connects the human being who performs it with G-d, who commanded it.

Before the Rebbe's "mitzvah campaign", the mitzvah was a private deed, performed by the "religious" Jew at home or in the synagogue. So it was only natural that the Rebbe's approach raised many an eyebrow: "Tefillin on a hippie?" "What's the point of doing one mitzvah on the way to lunch in a non-kosher restaurant?" Mitzvot were seen as the details that made up a religious Jew's lifestyle—pointless when not part of the whole package.

The Rebbe saw things differently. As a connection between man and G-d, as a bridge between Creator and creation, a mitzvah is a deed of cosmic significance, a deed of infinite value unto itself. Citing Maimonides, the Rebbe repeated time and again: a single person performing a single mitzvah, could be the deed that tips the scales and brings redemption to the entire world and all of creation.

*From "The Man and the Century",  
a timeline biography of the Rebbe at [www.TheRebbe.org](http://www.TheRebbe.org)*

**1975: PRISON ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Prison Juice

The Torah has no concept of prison as a punishment. Why? Because prison is a futile place. A place where you are told, "You must be here, but you must not change what this place is. You will grow older, but you must not take charge of your life. You will live, but you must not give life."

But a living human being must make change in his world, must take charge of his life, must give life to others.

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There are times G-d will put a soul in prison -- often a very lofty soul, such as Joseph. It is like being held in a vice. Squeezed with the ultimate of futility, the deepest powers of the soul break through.

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The worst prison is when G-d locks you up. He doesn't need guards or cells or stone walls. He simply decides that, at this point in life, although you have talent, you will not find a way to express it. Although you have wisdom, there is nobody who will listen. Although you have a soul, there is nowhere for it to shine.

And you scream, "Is this why you sent a soul into this world? For such futility?"

That is when He gets the tastiest essence of your juice squeezed out from you.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
(TFreeman@Chabadonline.com)*

## The Rebbe Said Thank You

When Joseph Cabiliv-today a successful real estate developer-regained consciousness in the Rambam Hospital in Haifa, he remembered nothing of the circumstances that had brought him there. He felt an excruciating pain in his legs. The discovery that followed was far more horrendous: glancing under the sheet, he saw that both his legs had been amputated, the right leg at the knee, the left at mid-thigh.

The day before, Joseph, who was serving on reserve duty in Zahal (the Israeli Defense Forces), was patrolling the Golan Heights with several other soldiers when their jeep hit an old Syrian land mine. Two of his comrades were killed on the spot. Another three suffered serious injury. Joseph's legs were so severely crushed that the doctors had no choice but to amputate them.

Aside from the pain and disability, Joseph was confronted with society's incapacity to deal with the handicapped. "My friends would come to visit," he recalls, "sustain fifteen minutes of artificial cheer, and depart without once meeting my eye. My mother would come and cry, and it was I, who so desperately needed consolation, who had to do the consoling. My father would come and sit by my bedside in silence-I don't know which was worse, my mother's tears or my father's silence.

"Returning to my civilian profession as a welder was, of course, impossible, and while people were quick to offer charity, no one had a job for a man without legs. When I ventured out in my wheelchair, people kept their distance, so that a large empty space opened up around me on the busiest street corner."

When Joseph met with other disabled veterans he found that they all shared his experience: they had given their very bodies in defense of the nation, but the nation lacked the spiritual strength to confront their sacrifice.

"In the summer of 1976," Joseph tells, "Zahal sponsored a tour of the United States for a large group of disabled veterans. While we were in New York, a Lubavitcher chassid came to our hotel and suggested that we meet with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Most of us did not know what to make of the invitation, but a few members of our group had heard about the Rebbe and convinced the rest of us to accept.

"As soon as they heard we were coming, the Chabadniks sprang into action, organizing the whole thing with the precision of a military campaign. Ten large commercial vans pulled up to our hotel to transport us and our wheelchairs to the Lubavitch headquarters in Brooklyn. Soon we found ourselves in the famous large synagogue in the basement of 770 Eastern Parkway.

"Ten minutes later, a white-bearded man of about 70 entered the room, followed by two secretaries. As if by a common signal, absolute silence pervaded the room. There was no mistaking the authority he radiated. We had all stood in the presence of military commanders and prime ministers, but this was unlike anything we had ever encountered. This must have been what people felt in the presence of royalty. An identical thought passed through all our minds: Here walks a leader, a prince.

"He passed between us, resting his glance on each one of us and lifting his hand in greeting, and then seated himself opposite us. Again he looked at each of us in turn. From that terrible day on which I had woken without my legs in the Rambam Hospital, I have seen all sorts of things in the eyes of those who looked at me: pain, pity, revulsion, anger. But this was the first time in all those years that I encountered true empathy. With that glance that scarcely lasted a second and the faint smile on his lips, the Rebbe conveyed to me that he is with me-utterly and exclusively with me.

"The Rebbe then began to speak, after apologizing for his Ashkenazic-accented Hebrew. He spoke about our 'disability,' saying that he objected to the use of the term. 'If a person has been deprived of a limb or a faculty,' he told, 'this itself indicates that G-d has given him special powers to overcome the limitations this entails, and to surpass the achievements of ordinary people. You are not "disabled" or "handicapped," but special and unique, as you possess potentials that the rest of us do not.

"I therefore suggest,' he continued, adding with a smile '-of course it is none of my business, but Jews are famous for voicing opinions on matters that do not concern them-that you should no longer be called *nechei Yisrael* ("the disabled of Israel," our designation in the Zahal bureaucracy) but *metzuyanei Yisrael* ("the special of Israel").' He spoke for several minutes more, and everything he said-and more importantly, the way in which he said it-addressed what had been churning within me since my injury.

"In parting, he gave each of us a dollar bill, in order-he explained-that we give it to charity on his behalf, making us partners in the fulfillment of a mitzvah. He walked from wheelchair to wheelchair, shaking our hands, giving each a dollar, and adding a personal word or two. When my turn came, I saw his face up close and I felt like a child. He gazed deeply into my eyes, took my hand between his own, pressed it firmly, and said 'Thank you' with a slight nod of his head.

"I later learned that he had said something different to each one of us. To me he said 'Thank you'-somehow he sensed that that was exactly what I needed to hear. With those two words, the Rebbe erased all the bitterness and despair that had accumulated in my heart. I carried the Rebbe's 'Thank you' back to Israel, and I carry it with me to this very day."



**1977: HEALING ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Healing The Other Way

There are two approaches to healing: One is to find whatever has been weakened and damaged by illness, then repair and strengthen it.

Another is to find whatever remains viable and healthy, and support and strengthen it. Since it is one body, fortifying one aspect brings healing to all the rest.

So too, the healing of the spirit: One path is to grab the weakness by its horns and fix up your act. Another is to focus your energies on the spiritual resources that are working well. Since it is one soul, when one area is enriched the rest is elevated with it.

So too, in repairing whatever is amiss in your world: When you see others are not doing their job, important work is being mishandled and valuable opportunities passed up, it is not a time for anger or despair. It is a time for you to strengthen many times over the good work you are doing in your own sphere.

And since we are all one, the energy you invest in your little corner of the world pays off in every other portion as well.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
(TFreeman@Chabadonline.com)*

**1978: SLEEP ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Beginnings

Every day, many billions of man-hours are slept down the drain. If there are 6,000,000,000 human beings in the world, and each sleeps an average of 7.2 hours a night -- well, you do the math. The bottom line is that slumbered time is probably our most wasted human resource.

Why do we spend 25% to 30% of our lives doing nothing? Why do we sleep?

Perhaps this seems a pointless question. Why sleep? Because our body demands it of us. Because that is how we are physiologically constructed--that we require so many hours of rest each day in order to function. But to the Jew, there are no pointless questions. If G-d created us a certain way, there is a reason. If our active hours must always be preceded by what the Talmud calls the "minor death" of sleep, there is a lesson here, a truth that is fundamental to the nature of human achievement.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains: If we didn't sleep, there would be no tomorrow. Life would be a single, seamless "today." Our every thought and deed would be an outgrowth of all our previous thoughts and deeds. There would be no new beginnings in our lives, for the very concept of a "new beginning" would be alien to us.

Sleep means that we have the capacity to not only improve but also transcend ourselves. To open a new chapter in life that is neither predicted nor enabled by what we did and were, up until now. To free ourselves of yesterday's constraints and build a new, recreated self.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov taught that G-d creates the world anew every millisecond of time. If we are His "partners in creation" (as the Talmud says we are), we should be able to do that too--at least once a day.

Wake up tomorrow--and start anew.



## 1979: SLEEPLESSNESS ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

*A Jew in Brooklyn*

Chaim Tzvi Schwartz was not a Lubavitcher Chassid before the war, his family had been followers of the Rebbe of Munkatch-but a certain day in 1946 found him seeking the counsel of the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Scheersohn. Rabbi Schwartz was a young refugee who had lost his entire family, and the only world he knew, in the Holocaust, and was at a loss as to what to do with his life.

"Speak to my son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson," said the Rebbe, and gave Chaim his blessing.

The Rebbe's son-in-law suggested that the young rabbi take up residence in a certain city in Brazil.

"Brazil?"

"There are a great number of Jewish refugees settling in Brazil. Due to the tribulations that our people have undergone in the last few years, most of them lack even the most basic rudiments of a Jewish education. Already, many have fallen prey to assimilation and intermarriage. It is the responsibility of every Torah-educated Jew to prevent the spiritual dissolution of our people. Go to Brazil and help build a community of knowledgeable and observant Jews."

Rabbi Schwartz accepted the mission, moved to Brazil, and founded a Jewish day school. Much effort and toil were necessary to find the funding, train the teachers, and convince the parents of the importance of granting their children a Jewish education. Over the years, Rabbi Schwartz saw his school flourish and grow, and its graduates form the nucleus of a community of proud, committed Jews.

Rabbi Schwartz maintained an infrequent but warm contact with the man who had sent him to Brazil, who had meanwhile assumed the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement following the passing of his father-in-law in 1950. From time to time, Rabbi Schwartz would seek the Rebbe's advice on various challenges and decisions he faced in the course of his work.

It was on one such occasion, several years after his arrival in Brazil, that Rabbi Schwartz truly realized the

scope of the Rebbe's concern for his people. Rabbi Schwartz related this incident to a Lubavitcher Chassid he met on a flight from Brazil to New York:

One day-he began his tale-I received a call from the parents of one of the children in my school, requesting a meeting. While this was a fairly common request, the anxiety in the voices on the phone told me that this was no simple matter. I invited them to meet with me in my home that evening.

"This does not concern our son," began the father, after they had settled in my study, "who is doing wonderfully in your school, but our eldest daughter, who grew up here before you came. As you know, we are not very observant, but it is important to us that our children should retain their identity as Jews. This is why we send our son to you, despite the fact that your school is considerably more 'religious' than ourselves.

"To get to the point, our daughter has informed us that she has fallen in love with a non-Jew and that they intend to marry. We have tried everything to dissuade her, but our arguments, appeals, threats and tears have all been to no avail. She now refuses to discuss the matter with us at all and has moved out of our home. Rabbi! You are our only hope! Perhaps you can reach her, perhaps you can impress upon her the gravity of the betrayal against her people, her parents and her own identity in what she intends to do!"

"Would she agree to meet with me?" I asked.

"If she knew that we had spoken to you, she'd refuse."

"Then I'll go speak to her on my own."

I took her address from her parents and rang her bell that very evening. She was visibly annoyed to learn of my mission, but too well-mannered not to invite me in. We ended up speaking for several hours. She listened politely and promised to consider everything I said, but I came away with the feeling that I had had little effect on her decision.

For several days I pondered the matter, trying to think of what might possibly be done to prevent the loss of a Jewish soul. Then I thought of my last resort-the Rebbe. I called the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Hodakov, related to him the entire affair, and asked for the Rebbe's advice as to what might be done. A few minutes later the phone rang. "The Rebbe says to tell the young woman," said Rabbi Hodakov, "that there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because

## 1979: SLEEPLESSNESS ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

*A Jew in Brooklyn*

she intends to marry a non-Jew."

The unexpected reply confused me, and I failed to understand what Rabbi Hodakov was saying. "Who is this Jew?" I blurted out.

Then I heard the Rebbe's voice on the other extension: "His name is Mendel Schneerson."

I slowly returned the receiver to its cradle, more confused than ever. Could I possibly do what the Rebbe suggested? Why, she'll slam the door in my face! After agonizing all night, I decided to carry out the Rebbe's instructions to the letter. After all, the fate of a Jewish soul was at stake, and what did I have to lose, except for my pride?

Early the next morning I was at her door. "Listen," she said before I could utter a word, "whom I marry is my own affair, and no else's. I respect rabbis and men of faith, so I heard you out when I should have shown you the door. Please go away and stop bothering me."

"There is one more thing I need to say to you," said I.

"Then say it, and go."

"There is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because you intend to marry a non-Jew."

"That's what you came to tell me?!" she said, incredulous, and proceeded to close the door.

Midway she stopped. "Who is this Jew?"

"A great Jewish leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe," I replied. "The Rebbe is greatly concerned about the material and spiritual well-being of every Jew, and agonizes over every soul that is lost to its people."

"What does he look like? Do you have a picture of him?"

"I should have a picture somewhere. I'll go and get it for you."

To my surprise, she didn't object, and indicated assent with a mute nod. I rushed home and nearly turned the house upside down in search of a photograph of the Rebbe. I finally found a photo in a desk drawer and hurried back to the young woman's apartment.

One look at the Rebbe's likeness and her face turned

pale. "Yes, it's him," she whispered.

"All week long," she explained, "this man has been appearing in my dreams and imploring me not to abandon my people. I told myself that I was conjuring up an image of a Jewish sage and putting those words in his mouth as a reaction to what you and my parents have been saying to me. But no, it was no conjecture. I have never met this man in my life, seen a picture of him, or even heard of him. But this is he-this is the man I have been seeing in my dreams..."

*Translated/adapted from Kefar Chabad magazine*

**1980: PARENTHOOD ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Why We Have Children

At a certain point in our lives we begin to understand that though we may have chosen to bring children into the world, this was not a "choice" we made—at least not in the conventional sense of the word.

We begin to realize that though we may have become parents because we wanted to, we could not have wanted otherwise. That something very deep and true inside us compelled us. Though it would be wrong to say we were "compelled", since the compelling force was none other than our deepest self.

Having children is an act of faith. Faith that the world is going somewhere good. Faith that in our children's lifetimes it will be a better place than it is now. How do we know this, when there's so much evidence to the contrary? We just do.

Having children is an act of trust. Trust in He who creates and sustains the world anew each moment of time, that He will provide what is needed to sustain one more partner to His grand plan. Who could have a child if they first had to prove that they could "afford" it? If parenthood required a license, like for operating a motor vehicle or practicing law, who would pass the test? Yet somehow we know that if we bring a child into the world, G-d will provide the resources to nourish them body and soul. As He did for our parents, who were perhaps no worse, but most likely no better, equipped for the task than we.

And having children is the ultimate self-assertion. It says: I am, and I shall continue to be. Forever.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com)  
based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*





**1981: CHILDHOOD ACCORDING  
TO THE REBBE**

*Learning the Child*

There are no one-way streets in our world. There is no way to give without getting, there is no one who gets but does not give.

So it is with the child. Just as the adult gives the child the knowledge and wisdom of life, so the child can give the adult the keys of how to live it.

What is it that the child has to teach?

The child naively believes that everything should be fair and everyone should be honest, that only good should prevail, that everybody should have what they want and there should be no pain or sadness. The child believes the world should be perfect and is outraged to discover it is not.

And the child is right.

Watch the child involved in an activity. Whatever the child is doing, there the child is, all the child.

A child's enthusiasm comes in a storm, taking over the child's entire world. That is why, when a child embraces a new, good trait, it enters forever.

The child delights in the simple things of life. Sometimes that delight could lead in the wrong direction. But the delight in itself is good.

We need to embrace and nurture the delight while weaning it from those things unwholesome.

A child cannot learn something without running out and screaming it to others. And so it should be with all those who have knowledge.

When a child feels something is missing the child wants it, demands it with all the heart and soul — and

demands it now.

We are all lacking, because the world is not the way it should be and none of us are in our proper place. We need to demand from the Owner Above that all this be repaired and be repaired now.

A child gives love for the sake of love. But even an adult can learn to do the same.

The child is certain that he or she is the center and focus of all. Father and mother and the rest of the universe exist merely to cater to his or her needs.

The undesirable aspects of such an attitude are self-evident, and weeding out the negative in man's base instincts is what education is all about. But the "selfishness" that the child exemplifies has a positive side as well. A child has no problem dealing with an insignificance of self in face of humanity's billions and the vastness of the universe. He is utterly convinced that his existence has meaning and his deeds have consequence.

This is the child in ourselves that we must learn to cultivate: the conviction that our every thought and deed is of real, even global, significance.

We know that a sneeze in New Jersey can cause a thunderstorm in China. Can we say the same of the social universe? Can a single act, word or thought on your part resound in billions of lives?

Ask your child. Or the child in you.

How will we preserve the innocence, the genius and the beauty of the child into adulthood?

First, we will nurture that beauty from its very beginning. We will surround the child with Torah and sing to it songs of wisdom even before it leaves the womb. We will make the child's room into a sanctuary with holy books, posters with thoughtful messages hanging on the walls and a charity box to be used daily.

And then, as the child emerges to discover that the world outside is not quite the same as that sanctuary, we will explain, "Yes, this is not the way it is supposed to be. But it is only temporary. You and I and all of us, we are going to change it. We are partners in the act of creating this world, because it is our mission to perfect it. And we are doing this now, with acts of beauty and kindness, one good deed at a

## 1982: BIRTHDAYS ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## What Happened on Your Birthday

For as long as men and women have been being born, they've had birthdays. Birthday parties are not that ancient, but they do go back at least 3,500 years (the book of Genesis mentions a banquet in honor of a Pharaoh's birthday back in 1534 bce). The interesting thing about birthday celebrations is that, for much of our history, they were not a very "Jewish" custom.

This is not to say that there are no sources in Torah for the concept of a birthday. The Talmud speaks of the specialty of a person's date of birth as a time of empowerment and opportunity for him or her. One of the most important days of the Jewish year is Rosh Hashanah, Adam's--and mankind's--birthday. But as a rule, Jews did not celebrate their birthdays. Indeed, while the dates of passing (*yahrtzeit*) of the great figures of Jewish history are recorded and commemorated, their dates of birth are mostly unknown.

King Solomon gave voice to this attitude when he said, "Better the day of death than the day of one's birth" (Ecclesiastes 7:1). On the face of it, this seems a rather negative view of life. But upon deeper contemplation, it in fact expresses the classical Jewish attitude that "deed is the paramount thing"--that actual achievement, rather than concept, theory or potential, is what is significant.

The newborn infant may be brimming with genius and talent--but he or she have not yet done anything with it. So what's there to celebrate? Who's to know whether the potential will be realized? Or that is will be realized toward good and G-dly ends?

The day of a person's passing, on the other hand, is the culmination of his or her mission in life. This is when the sum total of his or her achievements have come to actuality, to wield their combined influence on our lives. This is why the *yahrtzeit* of a great person is such a special occasion: when we celebrate a life, we do so at its point of greatest impact upon the world.

But also if we would attribute significance to pure potential, the birthday would not be the time to celebrate that, either. Weeks and months before the fetus emerges from the womb, it has hands and feet, a throbbing heart

and a thinking brain. If we're going to celebrate the creation of new potential, the time for that is a point prior to the birthday, perhaps the point of conception.

If you're thinking of celebrating your birthday, you're going to have to ask: Yes, I was born, but what *happened*?

Albert Einstein is reputed to have remarked, "The illusion that we are separate from one another is an optical delusion of our consciousness." You look at yourself and you look at me, and you see two entities. But matter is not really "solid" or clomped in bodies; it is a vast amalgam of infinitesimal points, each exerting a complex web of forces and counter-forces on its fellows. A "human being" is no more or less a distinct entity than an atom in his body, the planet he inhabits, or the universe as a whole.

Physically, there is no real division between your body and mine. But there is a deeper reality than that described by the laws of physics. At the heart of the Torah's vision of life is the idea that every individual human being has a soul--a distinct spiritual identity, and a distinct mission in life.

This is what came into being on your birthday. Not your physical existence, not your vitality, not your spiritual potential. The fetus exists, is alive, thinks and feels. But it is defined by Torah law as "a limb of its mother." It is not a distinct entity, a thing unto itself. Birth marks the point at which your body received and fused with your soul, the point at which you attained your individuality.

In recent times, the birthday has been re-instituted as a Jewishly and spiritually significant occasion. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, 1880-1950) promoted the celebration of the 18th of Elul, the birthday of two great figures in the Chassidic movement: Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism; and Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of its Chabad branch. Today, it has become widespread custom among Jews--particularly among Chassidim--to commemorate the birthdays of tzaddikim and leaders, and to designate one's own birthday as a time for introspection and celebration.

It is no accident that the rebirth of the birthday is intertwined with the rebirth of Chassidism. One of the central messages of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples is the very message of the birthday:

"You, as an individual," said the Chassidic masters, "are special, unique, and utterly indispensable. No person alive, no person who has ever lived, and no person who shall ever live, can fulfill the specific role in G-d's creation entrusted to you."

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com);  
based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

## 1983: THE DOLLAR ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## The Dollar

We pray for it, we slave for it, we devote our best years and finest talents to acquire it. And then we blame it for all our ills.

In particular, two basic accusations are leveled against the dollar:

a) It has usurped the position -- once occupied by the spiritual, the transcendent and the divine -- of the highest striving of man and the ultimate authority in his life. In this day and age, the dollar is god.

b) It is the cause of untold division and strife. It has pitted brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, nation against nation. Indeed, virtually all conflicts are conflicts between the haves and the have-nots. And what do the haves have that the have-nots do not? Money.

But is the dollar really at fault? Is a six-and-one-eighth by two-and-five-eighths inch piece of green and white paper to be blamed for the fact that we have transformed the ultimate means into an ultimate end? That a most potent social glue is used to build walls of hostility and fortresses of isolation?

What does the dollar itself say about its intended and perverted uses?

By divine providence, the designers of the dollar inscribed on it two key phrases. The first, which extends above the large "ONE" on its reverse side, is "In G-d we trust." Not I, says the dollar, can provide you with solace from the pain of life and security against its uncertainties; not I should serve as the object of your yearning and the focus of your striving. Do not trust in me -- trust in G-d. Do not serve me -- use me to serve G-d.

The second phrase, inscribed on the face of the Great Seal of the United States reproduced to the right, is "*E pluribus unum*" ("Out of many, one"). Yes, the world we perceive with our eyes of flesh is a plural world, a world of great variety and diversity. But our mission in life is to make of the many one, to unite these diverse forces into a harmonious expression of

the oneness of their Creator.

People are different -- differently endowed with talents, resources and opportunities. Money can deepen these differences, when it is used to hoard wealth, reward privilege and exploit the needy. But money is far more suited to unite and equalize. It is the ultimate abstractor, converting goods, talent and toil into a commodity that can easily be traded and shared. It is a medium of generosity and cooperation between men and nations, a consolidator of resources to a common end.

The next time you use or pursue a dollar, take a moment to read the fine print.

*Based on a talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningful-life.com)*



## 1984: TIME AND RADIO WAVES ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### The Speed of Light

For thousands of years, information traveled no faster than its human bearer. Beyond the range of the human ear and eye, man could communicate with his fellow only as speedily as the swiftest means he could devise to physically carry a person (or animal) across the miles which separated them.

But a century and a half ago, the very concept of communication underwent a radical transformation: man learned to translate words into pulses of energy surging through a copper wire. Then radio waves were discovered and exploited, even further freeing the flow of information from the limitations imposed by physical distance--ideas and data could now be transmitted across vast distances in virtually no time at all.

The new communication technologies yielded a vast array of tools which man --imbued by his Creator with the capacity to freely choose between good and evil -- could utilize to the betterment of his self and world, or to their detriment. But even more significant is the way these discoveries changed our very perception of the reality we inhabit. For the first time in our history, we experienced timelessness.

As physical beings, we inhabit a world defined by "spacetime"--a virtual grid in whose context all objects and events are assigned a "place" which defines their relationship vis-a-vis each other by placing an X amount of "distance" between them. Bridging this distance "takes time": to get from event A to event B, one must first pass through the seconds or centuries which separate them, one at a time; for object A to exert an influence upon object B, it must first surmount the millimeters or miles which separate them, one at a time. In other words, getting from point A to point B is a *process*--a sequence of actions occurring one after the other.

Such was our experience of reality before the advent of electronic communication. But with the invention of the telegraph, telephone and radio, the transfer of information became instantaneous. No longer did it take any longer to communicate across the globe than across the room. No longer was time a meaningful factor in linking two points on earth, regardless of the distance between

them.

Of course, it does take time for radio waves to pass through space: ultimately, our world is no less physical (i.e., no less defined by time and space) than it was two centuries ago. But the fact that we *experience* a link across distances in no perceptible duration of time represents a breakthrough not only in the way we live but also in the way we think. Perhaps we, living today, cannot appreciate how incredible the notion of instantaneous communication was to the mind of pre-telegraph man. We do know, however, that despite the fact that we never actually supercede time, the concept of "timelessness" has become part and parcel of our idea and experience of reality.

Paradoxically, our newly-acquired capacity to experience timelessness has also deepened our awareness of the timeliness of our lives. As long we lived wholly within time, we could not attain a true appreciation of what time is. Would we know that "light" exists and be able to study its characteristics if we never experienced darkness? Would we be aware of the phenomenon of "life" if never confronted by its deterioration and departure? To know a thing and appreciate its qualities and potentials we must first surpass its limits, at least in the realm of the mind.

Why is time necessary? And why is it important that we should understand what time is? Of course, we cannot even imagine what a truly timeless reality would be like (would everything happen at once? or would things not "happen" at all, only be?). But no matter: if G-d would have created a timeless world, that would have been the only comprehensible form of existence, and we would have had no idea of what "time" might be. So is time just one of many possible ways to make our world "work"? Or is there a deeper reason for this particular formulation of reality?

Conversely, we might ask: Having been placed within a time-bound reality, why have we been granted the ability to try its limits and advance to the threshold of timelessness? Is this just so that we should better appreciate the significance of time? Or is there some deeper reason why our time-centred lives must also include a glimpse of a reality beyond time's boundaries?

#### *Spiritual Time*

Even G-d's creation of the world "took time."

The Torah relates how G-d created the world in six days. On a deeper level, the Kabbalistic masters refer to the physical world as the last link of a *Seder Hishtalshelut* ("order of evolution")--a cosmic chain of "worlds" extending from heaven to earth. Kabbalah describes how G-d began His work of creation by creating all existences in their most sublime and spiritual

**1984: TIME AND RADIO WAVES ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## The Speed of Light

form, and then proceeded to cause them to evolve and metamorphose, in many steps and stages, into successively more concrete forms, ultimately producing our physical world—the "lowliest" and most tangible embodiment of these realities.

For example, physical water is the end product of a series of more spiritual creations, such as the emotion of love and the divine attribute of *chessed* ("benevolence"); physical earth is the material incarnation of string of creations which include concepts such as "femininity" and "receptiveness," and originate in the divine attribute of *malchut* ("regality"). And so it is with every object, force and phenomenon in our world: each exists on the many levels of the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, ranging from its most ethereal state to its most corporeal form.

Not only the contents of our physical world, but also its defining parameters—space and time—are "end-of-the-line" products of the *Seder Hishtalshelut*.

We know space as the three dimensions in whose context physical objects are positioned in spatial relation to each other (above, beside, behind, etc.). But there is also a conceptual space: we speak of "higher" and "lower" planes of reality; we describe ideas as "deep" or "shallow." So spiritual entities also occupy a "space" which defines their position in relation to each other and to world they occupy. Common thinking is that these "conceptual space" characterizations are merely mental projections of physical phenomena in an attempt by our physical minds to contemplate and discuss metaphysical abstractions. The truth, say the Kabbalists, is the very opposite: space originates as a wholly spiritual phenomenon, and then "descends" through the *Seder Hishtalshelut* to evolve into increasingly more concrete forms. Thus physical space derives from "conceptual space," which in turn evolved from an even more abstract form of space, and so on. The higher we ascend the chain of *Hishtalshelut*, the more abstract and ethereal is the space of that particular "world."

Time, too, exists on many levels, as it evolves from its most spiritual form all the way down to "our" physical time. What we experience as a one-way time arrow through the tenses of past, present and future is but the

last and most concrete incarnation of the element or phenomenon of time. As it descends through the *Seder Hishtalshelut* time is expressed in many forms: it is the essence of motion, causation, and change; it underlies the pulse of life, the processional nature of reason and the pendulum of feeling.

While physical time is chronological—its "past" occurs before its "future"—spiritual time is not so limited. For example, the concepts A ( $1+1=2$ ) and B ( $2-1=1$ ) occupy different positions in the timeline of logic: A precedes B in logical sequence (i.e., because one plus one equals two, *therefore* two minus one equals one). But the fact that B "follows" A does not mean that there is a point in physical time at which A exists and B does not. They both always exist, even as the "first" causes the "second." Or, to take an example from the "world" of emotion: feeling A may cause feeling B (e.g. a feeling of reverence and awe toward a great and magnificent being produces a yearning to approach this being and be touched by its greatness), but the possessor of these two feelings always had them both—they developed simultaneously in his heart, although the "first" (the awe) is the root and cause of the "second" (the craving to come close).

In other words, spiritual realities such as ideas and feelings also exist within "time," yet theirs is a more abstract, spiritual form of time, transcending the "one at a time" and "one way travel" limitations of physical time.

The *Seder Hishtalshelut* itself is a function of spiritual time: the very concept of an "order" and an "evolution" presumes a reality governed by cause and effect. Of course, the evolution of creation from spirit to matter did not "take time" in the commonplace sense of the word—G-d did not have to "wait" for the successive phases and stages of the *Seder Hishtalshelut* to yield its final product. In terms of physical time, the creation of the physical world—G-d's desired result of the creation-process—was instantaneous. But on the conceptual level, "time" is the framework within which the many levels of the created reality unfold.

Thus time may be regarded as the "first" creation. Since creation is a process in which a series of worlds evolve one from (and thus "after") the other, it is an event which "takes time"—at least in the most abstract sense of the term. On the other hand, G-d's act of creation did not take place "in" time, which would imply that there was something (i.e., the phenomenon of time) that wasn't created by G-d! So if time did not pre-exist creation yet is a necessary component of it, this means that time came into being as an integral part of the very concept "creation" (which is itself a created entity).

In other words, time exists because G-d desired that

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## The Speed of Light

creation should constitute a process—a chain of worlds extending from heaven to earth, each the product of its "predecessor." Without time (on the most abstract level) there could not be a *Seder Hishtalshelut*; and without time (on the physical level), we, who can only relate to spiritual concepts as abstractions of their counterparts in our physical reality, could not conceive of, much less contemplate, the "order of evolution" linking the Creator's most sublime works to our own world.

### *The Parable*

Of course, G-d did not "need" all this. He could have created the physical world in a truly instantaneous manner—not only in terms of physical time but in the conceptual sense as well, without passing through the stages of the *Seder Hishtalshelut*. So why create an entire chain of universes populated by spiritual versions of our reality, just so that our world should congeal into being as its lowest link? Why not just go ahead and create the physical reality as it is, since this was the objective of His creation?

In any act of creation or development, the method which yields instantaneous results usually represents the most direct and convenient approach—as far as the creator or developer is concerned. But what about those at the receiving end? How is such an approach—as opposed a phased, evolutionary process—reflected in the nature of the end-product? How does it affect its utility for those for whom it is intended?

Let us consider the example of a teacher who wishes to convey an idea to his pupil, and thereby create a new mental vista within the mind of the pupil. Our teacher has two possible approaches open to him. He can take the "direct approach" and simply declaim the idea as he, the teacher, understands it. Or, he can "coarsen" the idea by means of a parable or metaphor, bringing it down to his pupil's level by dressing it terms and concepts from the pupil's world.

In certain cases, bringing it down just one level would not be enough—even the parable might be too subtle for the pupil's unrefined mind. In such a case, the patient teacher will dress the parable in yet another layer—or even

numerous additional layers—of allegory, until his most abstract idea has been sufficiently tangibilized for consumption by the pupil's mind.

Once this has been achieved and the concept has been successfully "smuggled" into the pupil's mind within its allegorical packagings, the pupil can then proceed to ponder the parable and seek its deeper significance. Eventually, the pupil may succeed in his efforts to strip the concept of its outermost layer of tangibilization and reveal the next layer. Knowing that this, too, is but an allegory, the pupil will repeat the process. Ultimately, perhaps only after many years of mental toil and intellectual maturation, the pupil will uncover the innermost kernel of wisdom concealed within.

But why bother? Why not take the "direct approach" and simply articulate the concept in all its depth and profundity? Because were the teacher to do so, his words would be absolutely meaningless to the pupil. The pupil may record his master's words; he may review them and learn to repeat them verbatim; he may even, if keeps at it long enough, convince himself that he understands them; but, in truth, he has not gained an iota of insight into their significance.

Certainly, G-d could have created our physical reality in an "instantaneous" manner, without "bothering" with a *Seder Hishtalshelut*. But where would that leave us? We and our world would exist, but would we be capable of any insight into the significance of our existence? We could be told about our mission in life and our relationship with our Creator, but could we possibly understand it?

G-d wanted our lives to be a parable (of a parable of a parable) of a higher reality. He wanted that the world we inhabit should be but the outermost layer of successively more abstract and spiritual realities, each but a single leap of insight from the one within it, so that by beginning with our comprehension of our own reality we may ascend, step by step, in our understanding of whence we come and what and why we are.

### *The Limitations of Hishtalshelut*

Hence the "necessity" for the *Seder Hishtalshelut*. This is why the essence of time—the very phenomena of "evolution," "cause and effect" and "process"—was created: so that our physical existence should not be an island in the void of the incomprehensible but a connected link in a chain of worlds leading to its sublime origins in the creative energy of G-d. And because we experience time on our, physical level, we can relate to the concept of a *Seder Hishtalshelut* in "spiritual time" and retrace the process of creation by climbing the links of this cosmic chain.

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But all this is only one side of the story. The *Seder Hishtalshelut* is crucial to our mission in life, which dictates that we not only serve G-d but also strive to comprehend the nature of His relationship with our existence. But the "chain of evolution" is not only a link-it is also a screen, like the parable with conveys the idea but also simplifies its profundity and coarsens its subtlety. Were our relationship with the Almighty to be confined to the channel offered by the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, it would mean that we have no direct connection with the infinite and utterly indefinable reality of our Creator and the divine essence of creation. It would mean that we can relate to these truths only via the many garments in which G-d has shrouded Himself in order to make Himself and His creation comprehensible to us.

Let us return to our teacher and pupil. If you recall, the teacher is in the midst of expounding a parable (the last and most "external" of a string of parables) which will embody the concept, but will also obscure it and convey only the much constrained and coarsened version of it which the pupil is capable of comprehending. But the teacher also wants to somehow allow his pupil a glimpse of the "real thing," to accord him a true if fleeting vision of the concept in all its sublime purity. He wants the pupil to know that this is not where it's at; he wants him to appreciate the extent of that which lies buried within. Because although the "multi-parable" approach presents the pupil with the tools with which to ultimately attain a full and comprehensive understanding the concept, it is not free of its own pitfalls. There is a danger involved as well-the danger that the pupil will get bogged down in the parable itself (or in its second, third or fourth abstraction) and fail to carry it through to its ultimate significance; that he will come to mistake a shallow and external version of his master's teaching for the end of his intellectual quest.

So in the course of his delivery, the teacher will allow a word, a gesture, an inflection to escape the parable's rigid constraints. He will allow a glimmer of unconstrained wisdom to seep through the many layers of allegory which enclose the pure concept within. This "glimmer" will, of course, be utterly incomprehensible to the pupil; but it will impress upon him an appreciation of the depth

of the concept within the parable-an appreciation of how far removed he still is from a true comprehension of his master's teachings.

By the same token, G-d did more than make us creatures in time: He also empowered us to contemplate its limits and even experience a semblance of "timelessness" in our daily lives. And our complex relationship with physical time mirrors our souls' relationship with time's spiritual counterpart and predecessor. Even as G-d relates to us via the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, which dictates that our experience of Him be filtered through a chain of intellectual, emotional and spiritual processes, He also granted us moments of direct and unfiltered contact with Himself-moments of "instantaneous" connection that transcend the order of creation.

*Based on the talks and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningfullife.com)*



**1985: WAITING FOR THE  
MESSIAH ACCORDING TO  
THE REBBE**

The Window

*It happened before: a world drowning in violence awaited redemption. Waited for Divine action, because man had done all that was in his power and the rest was up to G-d.*

*Man waited in a sealed ark, but the ark had a window. And from the window a dove was dispatched to circle the skies, to agitate the heavens with its restless reconnaissance. For the next four thousand years its spread wings and the olive leaf clutched in its beak would symbolize humanity's quest for harmony and peace.*

*No, waiting is not a passive endeavor. On the threshold of redemption, we must open windows through which to look upon a harmonious tomorrow, and through which to dispatch winged emissaries to hasten the divine response from on high.*

The Book of Genesis (chapters 6-8) relates the story of the great deluge which swept the earth in the dawn of human history.

Outside the ark Noah had built and populated by divine command, the Flood raged, the violent culmination of a violent world. Within, Noah presided over a miniature universe: his family; "of all living things, two of each kind, a male and a female"; and "specimens of every food that is to be eaten ... to keep seed alive on the face of the earth."

For forty days and nights the rains fell, followed by five months in which the waters swelled and churned, cleansing the earth for the promise of a new beginning contained in the floating ark. Finally, the waters calmed and began to recede.

Noah then opened the window in the sealed ark and sent out a raven "to see if the waters had subsided from the surface of the earth." The raven which refused the mission, was followed by three doves: the first returned immediately, indicating that the Flood's waters still engulfed the earth; second came back in the evening, clutching "a plucked olive leaf" and the promise of a new life for earth. The third did not return at all, inform-

ing the Ark's inhabitants that the earth is ready for habitation.

Why did Noah dispatch these winged emissaries? Obviously, he was eager to rebuild, to replace the mayhem of the Flood with a new, harmonious world. However, it would seem that Noah would have had little use for whatever information these "reconnaissance flights" might provide him. In fact, even after he was convinced that the Flood was over, Noah could not act on his own assessment that the earth was ready for a new beginning to take root. Noah had first entered the ark by the explicit command of G-d, and as long he did not receive further instructions to the contrary, the divine injunction "Come into the ark" remained in force. Only upon being commanded to "Go out from the ark" and "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (commands which came several weeks after the third dove's mission) could he begin settling and developing the world outside the ark.

Hence the question: for what purpose did Noah dispatch the raven and the doves?

*Contemporary Arks*

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov explains the relevance to our daily lives of the divine instruction to Noah, "Come into the ark." The Hebrew word for ark, *teivah*, also means "word." Come into the word, says the Almighty to each and every one of us; enter within the words of prayer and Torah study. Here you will find a haven of wisdom, meaning and sanctity amidst the raging floodwaters of life.

The word that the Torah uses for the Flood is *mabul*, which means disorder and confusion. Our world is a *mabul* of moral disarray and distorted priorities. But even as the chaos of a still-imperfect world churns about us, we have the ability to create, as did Noah, an island of tranquillity and perfection, sheltered by the protective words (*teivot*) of Torah and prayer.

Furthermore, the personal havens we create are not confined to the interior world of our minds and hearts. As was the case with Noah's *teivah*, we also bring "specimens" from the outside world into the sanctity of our "ark." Through our observance of the mitzvot, we employ a great variety of the creatures and elements to fulfill G-d's will: the animal hide that is made into *tefillin*, the wool spun into *tzitzit*, the food which provides the energy to pray, the money given to charity. These are all "brought into the *teivah*"-made part of a personal universe that is wholly devoted to good and G-dly pursuits.

But our personal arks are not ends in themselves. It is

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not sufficient to bring "samples" from the outside into the insulated havens of Torah and prayer and content ourselves with these pockets of perfection adrift in a strife-torn world. Our "arks" must also serve as the seeds from which a new world, embracing the entirety of creation, will grow. Our mission in life is to create a world free of greed, jealousy and hate, a world suffused with the wisdom and goodness of its Creator; to translate the G-dly perfection of our personal *teivot* into the divinely perfect world of Moshiach.

The directive, "Come into the ark," which characterizes our task during the *mabul*-years of history, is but a prelude to the "Go out from the ark" era of Moshiach, when the holiness and perfection of a Torah-defined existence will extend to all of creation.

### *Awaiting Word*

As with Noah, we must await the word. It is not for us to decide that the era of Moshiach has begun. It is by G-d's command that we entered the "ark," and it is He who will send Moshiach to herald the new dawn.

This may lead to the belief that we must passively wait for the redemption. Therein lies the lesson of Noah's winged emissaries: well before he was commanded to "Go out from the ark," Noah opened a window to the outside world. As soon as he sensed signs of the Flood's abatement, he dispatched messengers to "test the waters" and confirm the fact that the world was ready for rebirth. Noah did not content himself with developing the inner world of the *teivah* while letting history take its course, but did everything in his power to establish the world's readiness, thereby hastening the divine empowerment to make his ark a universal reality.

Today, we find ourselves at the same crossroads that Noah faced forty-one centuries ago. All around us, we detect signs of a world that is bettering and perfecting itself, beating its nuclear swords into the plowshares of aid to the hungry and accepting the principles of freedom, justice and compassion as

universal givens. Amidst this calming and abatement of the *mabul*'s waters, we cannot, and must not, closet ourselves in our insulated arks, concerning ourselves only with the perfection of our individual lives and communities, waiting for G-d to send Moshiach. We must throw open the windows of our "arks" and reach out to a world that is shedding the turmoil of its *mabul* past. Our continued efforts to establish that the world is indeed ready for redemption will hasten the divine word from on high, instructing us that the era of universal peace is upon us.

*Based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe; reprinted from The Inside Story by Yanki Tauber*

**1986: THE 120-SECOND ENCOUNTER ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***The Diamond Collector*

For the first twenty-eight years of his leadership, the Rebbe would receive his chassidim, as well as men and women from all walks of life, in yechidut (private audience) three (and later two) times a week. The audiences, held on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, would begin shortly after nightfall and extend through the night; often, the last of the several hundred visitors would depart at dawn. Most had only a minute or two in the presence of the Rebbe, but all would come away with the feeling that in their time with him, however brief, the Rebbe was with them with his entire being, wholly and exclusively focused on their individual concerns.

The number of those seeking the Rebbe's advice and blessing continued to grow; soon all but the most urgent cases had to wait several months for a yechidut appointment. Finally, the requests for meetings with the Rebbe reached such numbers that it was no longer possible to accommodate them. Individual contact with the Rebbe now took the form of written correspondence: some three mailsacks of letters would arrive each day to his office at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, each of which he would personally open and read.

In 1986, the Rebbe began conducting a weekly "receiving line." Each Sunday, the Rebbe would stand in a small room near his office as thousands of men, women and children filed past to see him and receive his blessing. Many used the opportunity to pose a question and receive a word of advice. And to each of them the Rebbe gave a dollar bill, appointing them as his personal agent (shaliach) to give it to the charity of their choice.

Why the dollar? The Rebbe explained his custom by quoting his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, who would often say: "When two Jews meet, something good should result for a third." The Rebbe wished to elevate each of the thousands of encounters of the day to something more than a meeting of two individuals; he wanted that each should involve the performance of a mitzvah, particularly a

mitzvah that also benefits another individual.

Again, a most amazing phenomenon was reported by all who came for "Sunday Dollars." The Rebbe, well into his ninth decade at the time, would stand for as long as eight hours without interruption. Yet in the few seconds that he or she was with the Rebbe, each visitor felt that the Rebbe was there only for them. It was as though he or she were the only visitor of the day.

Once, an elderly woman could not contain herself and burst out: "Rebbe, How do you do it? How is it that you do not tire?"

The Rebbe smiled and replied: "Every soul is a diamond. Can one grow tired of counting diamonds?"

**1987: WOMEN IN OUTREACH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Outgoing Woman

*And Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And Shechem the son of Chamor the Hivite, prince of the land, saw her; and he abducted her...*

Genesis 34:1-2

In the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis we read of Dinah's abduction, her brothers' cunning plot to disable the people of Shechem, her rescue, and the destruction of the city.

Our sages note that in the opening verse of its account the Torah introduces Dinah as *Leah's* child. She is not referred to as "the daughter of Jacob," or "the daughter of Jacob and Leah," or even as "the daughter of Leah and Jacob," but as "the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob." Rashi explains:

*Because of her "going out," she is called "the daughter of Leah." For [Leah], too, was an "outgoer," as it is written, "And Leah went out to greet him" (Genesis 30:16). Regarding her it has been said, "Like mother, like daughter."*

At first glance, this seems an indictment of Leah's and Dinah's behavior. The hallmark of the Jewish woman is her *tzniut*, the modesty in dress and demeanor expressed by the verse (Psalms 45:14), "The entire glory of the king's daughter is within." A Jewish girl, Rashi seems to be saying, has no business going out to visit with the daughters of a pagan land; when she does, she is not acting as a "daughter of Jacob" but like her mother, who is known to have, on occasion, embarked on "outings" of her own. For the king's daughter to leave her inner sanctum is to expose herself to all sorts of negative encounters, as Dinah's case tragically demonstrates.<sup>[1]</sup>

This, however, cannot be Rashi's intention, for it runs contrary to what he writes in his commentary on a previous verse. A few chapters back, where Jacob is preparing for his encounter with his wicked brother Esau, we read:

And [Jacob] took his two wives, his two handmaidens, and his eleven sons, and he crossed the ford of Yabbok (Genesis 32:23).

Asks Rashi: What about his daughter?

Where was Dinah? Jacob had placed her in a chest and locked her in, lest Esau set his eyes on her. For this, Jacob was punished, for had he not withheld her from his brother, perhaps she would have brought [Esau] back to the proper path. [The punishment was] that she fell into the hands of Shechem.

In other words, it was Jacob's isolation of Dinah, not Dinah's and Leah's outgoingness, that was the cause of Dinah's misfortune. Dinah should not have been hidden from Esau. Her encounter with the big, bad world should not have been avoided—indeed, it should have been welcomed. Jacob feared that she would be corrupted by her wicked uncle; he should have realized that, with her firm moral grounding and unassailable integrity, she was far more likely to influence Esau for the better.

Interestingly enough, here, too, there is a mother-daughter connection. The Torah (in Genesis 29:17) tells us that "Leah's eyes were weak." Rashi explains that they were weak from weeping:

*She wept over the thought that she would fall to the lot of Esau. For everyone was saying: "Rebecca has two sons and Laban has two daughters; the elder son (Esau) is destined for the elder daughter (Leah), and the younger son (Jacob) for the younger daughter (Rachel)."*

This was more than common speculation; according to the Midrash, these were matches ordained in heaven. But Leah's tearful prayers changed the heavenly decree, and both sisters were married to the righteous younger son. But it was Leah who was Esau's potential soulmate. If she herself felt unequal to the challenge of dealing with his wickedness, her daughter and spiritual heir, Dinah, could have served as the instrument of Esau's redemption.

This is the deeper significance of the adage, "like mother, like daughter," quoted by Rashi. Our children inherit not only our actual traits but also our unrealized potentials. Physically, a brown-eyed mother may transmit to her child the potential for blue eyes inherited from *her* mother but dormant in her genes. Spiritually, a parent may impart to a child the ability to achieve what, for the parent, is no more than a subtle potential buried in the deepest recesses of his or her soul.



**1987: WOMAN IN OUTREACH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## Outgoing Woman

So Dinah's going out to make the acquaintance of the "daughters of the land" was fully in keeping with her and her mother's unique gifts. Her exposure to an alien environment would not have adversely affected her Jewish femininity, her King's daughter's inner glory. On the contrary: she was born to the role of the outgoing Jewess, who serves as a source of enlightenment to her surroundings without compromising her modesty and innerness. Rather, it was Jacob's attempt to closet her that invited disaster. In going out to the daughters of the land, Dinah was truly the daughter of Leah-in the positive sense. She was not the "daughter of Jacob," for Jacob had hesitated to put her outgoing nature to its intended use. [ii]

### *Within Without*

Therein lies a message to women of all generations:

The Torah sees man and woman as having been imparted by their Creator with distinct characteristics and roles. Man is a "conqueror," charged to confront and transform a resistant, often hostile, world. To this end, he has been supplied with an extroverted and aggressive nature, a nature he is to apply constructively in the war of life-the war to combat the negative without and to redeem the positive elements and opportunities held captive in the most spiritually desolate corners of G-d's creation.

Woman is his diametric opposite. Her intrinsic nature is non-confrontational, introverted, modest. For while man battles the demons without, woman cultivates the purity within. She is the mainstay of the home, nurturer and educator of the family, guardian of all that is holy in G-d's world. "The entire glory of the king's daughter is within."

But "within" does not necessarily mean indoors. The woman, too, has a role that extends beyond the home, extends also to the most alien of daughters and the most pagan of lands. A

woman who has been blessed with the aptitude and talent to influence her sisters, can, and must, be an "out-goer," periodically leaving her haven of holiness to reach out to those who have lost grounding and direction in their lives.

And when she does, she need not, and must not, assume the warrior stance of the man. Confrontation and conquest is not the only way to deal with the outside world-there is also a feminine way, a gentle, modest and compassionate way to extract goodness from the evil that rages without. Confrontation is often necessary, but it is also often ineffective and even detrimental. Even the fiercest of battles needs the feminine touch of the outgoing woman.

### notes:

[i]. Indeed, it is in this negative light that the Midrash Rabbah (Bereishit 80:1) compares the "going out" of mother and daughter. But Rashi's selective quoting of this Midrash, as well as his earlier words on Genesis 32:23 (quoted in this essay) and 30:17 (see next note) imply an entirely different perspective on the matter.

[ii]. This explains the connection between Leah's "going out" to greet Jacob cited by Rashi and Dinah's foray to the pagan daughters of Canaan. Leah, the Torah tells us, had just purchased Rachel's conjugal rights with Jacob in return for the mandrakes her son, Reuben, had picked in the field. When Jacob came home that evening, "Leah went out to greet him, and said: 'You shall come to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes'" (Genesis 30:16). At first glance, Leah's behavior (like Dinah's) seems unbecoming the modesty of the Jewish woman; but Rashi, in his commentary on the following verse, considers the Torah's recounting of the incident to be in praise of Leah, lauding the fact that "she desired and sought to increase the tribes [of Israel]." In other words, while Leah's ability to positively influence others was not actualized by her in her personal life (as evidenced by her reluctance to marry Esau), she devoted her life to mothering the sons and daughter who would realize her innately outgoing nature.

*Based on the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
reprinted from The Inside Story by Yank Tauber*

## 1988: MOURNING ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## The Decree

*And G-d spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: This is the decree (chok) of the Torah .... If a person should die in a tent, all that enter the tent and all that is in the tent shall be tamei (ritually impure) for seven days.... And for the contaminated person they shall take from the ashes [of the Red Heifer]...*

Numbers 19:1-2, 14-17

The law of the "Red Heifer," which instructs how to purify a person from the ritual impurity caused by contact with a dead body, is often cited as the ultimately supra-rational divine decree. King Solomon, the "wisest of men," said of this mitzvah: "All [of the Torah's commandments] I have comprehended. But the chapter of the Red Heifer, though I have examined it, questioned it and searched it out-I thought to be wise to it, but it is distant from me" (Midrash Rabbah, Bamidbar 19:3, after Ecclesiastes 7:23).

There are, indeed, many aspects to the law of the Red Heifer which defy rationalization. In the first place, the very phenomenon of "ritual purity" is a mystical, supra-rational concept. The purification process, which is achieved by sprinkling the ashes of a Red Heifer upon the contaminated person, follows no logic we can see. And then there are the internal inconsistencies in the law, such as the fact that while the sprinkling of the ashes purifies the contaminated person, it renders impure the one who did the sprinkling.

But there are other laws in the Torah which are no less elusive to human reason. In fact, there exists an entire category of mitzvot, called *chukim* ("decrees"), whose defining criteria is that they cannot be comprehended by the mortal mind. What is it about the law of the Red Heifer that makes it the archetypal "decree," the mitzvah of which G-d says: "This is the chok of the Torah"?

*Moses Turned Pale*

The Midrash tells us that Moses was the only human being who was granted an understanding of the law of the Red Heifer. "To you," G-d said to

Moses, "I shall reveal the meaning of the Heifer; to everyone else it is a chok." Yet Moses, too, experienced great difficulty in accepting this law, as we see from the following Midrashic account:

In everything that G-d taught Moses, He would tell him both the manner of contamination and the manner of purification. When G-d came to the laws concerning one who comes in contact with a dead body, Moses said to Him: "Master of the universe! If one is thus contaminated, how may he be purified?!" G-d did not answer him. At that moment, the face of Moses turned pale.

When G-d came to the section of the "Red Heifer," He said to Moses: "This is its manner of purification." Said Moses to G-d: "Master of the universe! This is a purification?" Said G-d: "Moses, it is a *chok*, a decree that I have decreed, and no creature can fully comprehend My decrees" (Midrash Rabbah, Kohelet 8:5).

*The Mystery of Death*

The departure of the soul from the body is incomprehensible to us. Not rationally - rationally, death makes perfect sense. We understand the fragility of life, the dissolutive nature of everything physical. But in our heart of hearts, we refuse to accept it. Regardless of all "evidence" to the contrary, we persist in seeing life as eternal; regardless of what the mind explains, we reject the very concept of death.

Even more difficult to accept is that there can be some process, some formula, that can possibly deal with, let alone heal, the terrible void of life departed. What possible antidote can there be to the anguish, the emptiness, the utter futility that death brings to the human heart?

This was why Moses turned pale upon hearing about the ritual laws of death. It was not for the lack of rational understanding of how the spiritual stain of death can be cleansed; indeed, Moses was the one human being to whom "the meaning of the Heifer" was revealed. Still he cried: "Master of the universe! Is this a purification?" You have explained to me how the ashes of the Red Heifer "work." My mind is satisfied, but this does little to still the turmoil of my heart. My heart cannot comprehend how the evil of death can possibly be mitigated.

And G-d replied: "Moses, it is a chok, a decree that

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I have decreed." Certain things are so overwhelming to My creations that they can only be overcome by submitting to an absolute command from an absolute authority. I have therefore commanded laws to instruct you what to do when your lives are touched by death. These are supra-rational, even irrational laws, for only such laws can facilitate your recovery. It is only by force of an utterly incomprehensible divine decree that you can recover from death.

*The Laws of Mourning*

Today, we do not have the ashes of the Red Heifer. But we do have laws and rituals to deal with death. Torah law instructs us to mourn the death of a loved one - and then regulates our mourning. The very concept of "laws of mourning" is incomprehensible. Can a person be instructed to mourn? Can he, conversely, be instructed to reduce or cease his mourning?

Yet this is precisely what the Torah does. There are specific laws that govern the intensity of the mourning in the hours from the death to the burial (a period called *onanut*), specific laws for the first three days following the burial, for the first seven days (*shivah*), for the first thirty days (*sheloshim*), and for the first year following a death. At each of these junctures, it is demanded of us to cross over into a new phase of mourning - a phase in which the intensity of our anguish and sense of loss is further mitigated and sublimated.

We resist these milestones with every fiber of our being. The mind understands the difference between the *shivah* and the *sheloshim* and between the *sheloshim* and the first year, but the heart does not accept it. One need not be disheartened by this internal resistance: the Torah tells us that Moses himself could not prevail upon his heart to accept what his mind had been given to understand. Even after G-d explained to Moses how the "Red Heifer" sublimates an encounter with death, it remained a *chok* - distant from the greatest of minds and utterly incomprehen-

ble to every heart. Yet G-d commands us to make these transitions, and empowers us to fulfill His command.

It is the power of the divine decree that enables us to go on - both in our own lives, and in our work on behalf of others (for surely those who are dependent upon us cannot be made to wait until our minds and hearts have fully integrated what we know is expected of us). And the power of the divine decree is such that we can ultimately prevail upon ourselves to sublimate the negativities of death.

May we soon merit the day that such sublimation will no longer be necessary-the day when the Almighty will "remove the spirit of impurity from the earth" so that "death shall cease forever and G-d shall erase the tear from every face" and "those who dwell in the dust shall waken and rejoice."

*Based on two addresses delivered by the Rebbe on Adar 21, 5748 (March 10, 1988), upon the conclusion of the sheloshim of his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, of blessed memory. Adapted by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningfullife.com)*

## 1989: PHYSICALITY AND SPIRITUALITY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### Reverse Biology

*In Your abounding compassion, You have given us this fast day of Yom Kippur... A day on which it is forbidden to eat, forbidden to drink...*

From the Musaf prayer for Yom Kippur

*In the World to Come, there is neither eating nor drinking...*

Talmud, Berachot 17a

The human being consists of a body and a soul--a physical envelope of flesh, blood, sinew and bone, inhabited and vitalized by a spiritual force described by the Chassidic masters as "literally a part of G-d above."

Common wisdom has it that spirit is loftier than matter, and the soul holier (i.e., closer to the Divine) than the body. This conception seems to be borne out by the fact that Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year--the day on which we achieve the height of intimacy with G-d--is ordained by the Torah as a fast day, a day on which we seemingly abandon the body and its needs to devote ourselves exclusively to the spiritual activities of repentance and prayer.

In truth, however, a fast day brings about a deeper, rather than more distant, relationship with the body. When a person eats, he is nourished by the food and drink he ingests. On a fast day, vitality comes from the body itself--from energy stored in its cells. In other words, on less holy days, it is an outside force (the energy in one's food and drink) that keeps body and soul together; on Yom Kippur, the union of body and soul derives from the body itself.

Yom Kippur thus offers a taste of the culminating state of creation known as the "World to Come." The Talmud tells us that "in the World to Come, there is neither eating nor drinking"--a statement that is sometimes understood to imply that in its ultimate and most perfect state, creation is wholly spiritual, devoid of bodies and all things physical. Kabbalistic and Chassidic teaching, however, describe the World to Come as a world in which the physical dimension of existence is not abolished, but is preserved and elevated. The fact that there is "neither eating or drinking" in the World to Come is not due to an absence of bodies and physical life, but to the fact that in this future world, "the soul will be nourished by the body" itself, and the symbiosis of matter and spirit that is man will not require any outside sources of nutrition to sustain it.

#### *Two Vehicles*

The physical and the spiritual are both creations of G-d. Both were brought into being by Him out of utter nothingness, and each bears the imprint of its Creator in the par-

ticular qualities that define it.

The spiritual, with its intangibility and its transcendence of time and space, reflects the sublimity and infinity of G-d. The spiritual is also naturally submissive, readily acknowledging its subservience to a higher truth. It is these qualities that make the spiritual "holy" and a vehicle of relationship with G-d.

The physical, on the other hand, is tactual, egocentric and immanent--qualities that brand it "mundane" rather than holy, that mark it as an obfuscation, rather than a manifestation, of the divine truth. For the unequivocal "I am" of the physical belies the truth that "there is none else besides Him"--that G-d is the sole source and end of all existence.

Ultimately, however, everything comes from G-d; every feature of His every creation has its source in Him and serves to reveal His truth. So on a deeper level, the very qualities that make the physical "unholy" are the qualities that make it the most sacred and G-dly of G-d's creations. For what is the "I am" of the physical if not an echo of the unequivocal being of G-d? What is the tactility of the physical if not an intimation of the absoluteness of His reality? What is the "selfishness" of the physical if not an offshoot, however remote, of the exclusivity of G-d expressed in the axiom "There is none else besides Him"?

Today, the physical world shows us only its most superficial face, in which the divine characteristics stamped in it are corrupted as a concealment, rather than a revelation, of G-dliness. Today, when the physical object conveys to us "I am," it bespeaks not the reality of G-d but an independent, self-sufficient existence that challenges the divine truth. But in the World to Come, the product of the labor of a hundred generations to sanctify the material world, the true face of the physical will come to light.

In the World to Come, the physical will be no less a vehicle of divinity than the spiritual. In fact, in many respects, it will surpass the spiritual as a conveyor of G-dliness. For while the spiritual expresses various divine *characteristics*--G-d's infinity, transcendence, etc.--the physical expresses the *being* of G-d.

Today, the body must look to the soul as its moral guide, as its source of awareness and appreciation of all things divine. But in the World to Come, "the soul will be nourished by the body." The physical body will be a source of divine awareness and identification that is loftier than the soul's own spiritual vision.

Yom Kippur is a taste of this future world of reverse biology. It is thus a day on which we are "sustained by hunger," deriving our sustenance from the body itself. On this holiest of days, the body becomes a source of life and nurture rather than its recipient.

*Based on the talks and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningfullife.com)*



**1990: THE JEWISH PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

Cold Soup

If you ask someone coming out of church on a Sunday, "Do you believe in G-d?" the worshipper is shocked. "What type of question is that? Of course I do!" If you then ask him, "Do you consider yourself religious?" what will the answer be? "Certainly. That's why I'm here!"

If you go to a mosque on Friday and you ask the average person there, "Do you believe in G-d?" what will the answer be? "Definitely." "Do you consider yourself religious?" "Well, obviously."

This is normal. These conversations make sense.

Now go to synagogue on Yom Kippur. Ask the Jew sitting in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, fasting, "Do you believe in G-d?"

You cannot get a straight answer. "Umm, it depends on what you mean by 'G-d.'" That's if they're the philosophical type. Otherwise they'll simply say, "What am I? A rabbi? I don't know."

So then ask them, "Do you consider yourself religious?" Have you ever asked an American Jew if they're religious? They crack up laughing. And they assure you that they're the furthest things from religious. "Are you kidding? Do you know what I eat for breakfast?"

Then every one of them will say, "I had a grandfather, on my mother's side, oh, that was a religious man. But me...?"

So you ask what appears to be a logical question. "Then why are you here?"

For some reason, this average Jew, who doesn't believe in G-d and is very not religious, will look at you like you're crazy and say, "What do you mean? It's Yom Kippur!"

This is not normal.

Let's analyze this for a moment. What is this Jew actually saying?

You asked him if he believes in G-d and he said "No." Or "When I was younger I used to." Or "When I get

older I'll start to."

"So you don't believe in G-d?"

"No. I don't."

"Are you religious?"

"Furthest thing from it."

"So why are you here?"

"Because it's Yom Kippur!"

What he's saying is this: "Why am I here? Because G-d wants a Jew to be in the synagogue on Yom Kippur. So where else should I be?"

So you say: "But you don't believe in G-d."

He says, "So what?" and he doesn't understand your problem.

He is saying: "Today is Yom Kippur even if I don't have a calendar. This is a synagogue even if I don't like it. I am a Jew even if I'm not religious, and G-d is G-d even when I don't believe in Him. So what's your problem?"

Now that can be dismissed, and unfortunately many of us do dismiss it, as sheer hypocrisy. We say, "You don't believe in G-d and you're not religious--don't come to the synagogue. Don't come here just to show how Jewish you are."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe has a different approach. This insanity is what makes us Jewish. This is what shows how special we are in our relationship with G-d.

That's called truth. It's not about me. I don't want to be religious. I don't want to believe in G-d, I don't want to hear about this. But He wants me here, so here I am.

The same thing happens on Passover. Every Jew sits by a Seder. Ask the average Jew at a Seder, do you believe in G-d? Leave me alone. Are you religious? He chokes on the matzo laughing. So you're celebrating the Exodus from Egypt 3300 years ago? History is not my subject. Then why are you here? Where should I be? It's Passover! That's what's so magnificent about the Jew.

Now let's put it all in context. Three thousand, three hundred and twelve years ago G-d asked us if we would marry him. We had an extraordinary wedding ceremony, with great special effects--we were wowed. After the wedding He said, "I have a few things I'd like you to take care of for me so, please... I'll be right back." He hasn't been heard from since. For three thousand, three hundred and twelve years. He has sent messengers, messages, postcards--you know, writing on the walls... but

## 1990: THE JEWISH PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Cold Soup

we haven't heard a word from Him in all this time.

Imagine, a couple gets married, and the man says to his new wife, "Would you make me something to eat, please? I'll be right back." She begins preparing. The guy comes back 3300 years later, walks into the house, up to the table, straight to his favorite chair, sits down and tastes the soup that is on the table. The soup is cold.

What will his reaction be? If he's a wise man, he won't complain. Rather he'll think it's a miracle that the house is still there, that his table and favorite chair are still there. He'll be delighted to see a bowl of soup at his place. The soup is cold? Well, yes, over 3300 years, soup can get cold.

Now we are expecting Moshiach. The Rebbe introduced this radical notion that Moshiach is going to come now. What makes that so radical? It means he's going to come without a two-week notice. We always thought there was going to be some warning, so that we could get our act together before he comes. Moshiach, coming now? But now I'm not ready. I don't want to be judged the way I am. I need a little bit of a notice.

If Moshiach comes now, and wants to judge, what's he going to find? Cold soup?

If Moshiach comes now, the Rebbe tells us, he will find an incredibly healthy Jewish people. After 3300 years we are concerned about being Jewish, which means we are concerned about our relationship with G-d.

Moshiach comes today, he'll find that our soup is cold. We suffer from separation anxiety. We suffer from a loss of connection to our ancestors. We suffer a loss of connection even to our immediate family. The soup is cold. The soup is very cold. But whose fault is that? And who gets the credit for the fact that there is soup altogether?

We are a miracle. All we need to do is tap into it. We are the cure. Not only for ourselves, but also for the whole world. Through us the healing is holistic, it's natural, it's organic. Our relationship with G-d is organic. It's not a religion that we practice--it's us, it's who we are, it's what we are.

So the Rebbe tells us that the way to go is straight to G-d. Skip all the steps, skip the Kabbalah, go straight to G-d and be in touch with your purpose. The purpose is not Kabalistic. The purpose is personal. G-d needs you to do a mitzvah. He sent you into this world to be who you are, because only you can do this particular kind of mitzvah. True, the mitzvot are the same for all of us. But when you do it, it's different, because it's holistic. It's with your emotions, with your past problems, with your family background, with your knowledge and with your ignorance. All that comes together and makes your mitzvah holistically unique.

So let Moshiach come now and catch us here with our cold soup because we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are truly incredible. When G-d decided to marry us, He knew He was getting a really good deal.

*By Rabbi Manis Friedman (Manis@RabbiFriedman.org)*

1991: MIRACLES ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Nature and the Miraculous

Everywhere in the world, parents play peek-a-boo with their children. It is a major discovery of life, a cornerstone in human development: To realize that something is there even when you cannot see it, that the world is not defined by your subjective perception, that there is something that absolutely is -- whether you know of it or not.

All our life, all of the world, is G-d playing with us that same game. He peeks with a miracle and then hides behind nature. Eventually, we look behind nature to find Him there.

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If He had made the world a complete and utter mystery, we would have no path to know Him. And if all would fit together like a neat and tidy grandfather clock, we would not know that there is anything more to know.

So He took His raw, unknowable Will and cloaked it in wisdom, from which He formed a world. We approach the wisdom only to find ourselves swimming in an unfathomable ocean of wonders.

Now it is within the mind's grasp to know that no thought can grasp Him.

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An open miracle is somewhat of a disappointment for G-d. Once all is said and done, He got His way only by ignoring the norms of our lower world. To perform miracles only by bullying Nature is to concede that our world is a place the Infinite Light does not belong.

To make a true impact, He also makes miracles that blend seamlessly into the order of things below.

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G-d can do anything. He could even, as the

Talmudic saying goes, "fit an elephant through the eye of a needle."

So, how would He do it? Would He make the elephant smaller? Or would He expand the eye of the needle?

Neither. The elephant would remain big, the eye of the needle small. And He would fit the elephant through the eye of the needle.

Illogical? True. But logic is just another of His creations. He who created logic is permitted to disregard it.

When the world was made, G-d was left with two lights: A light of boundless energy that encompasses all things and gives them being, but transcends them, and a penetrating light that vitalizes all things but is limited and darkened by them.

The first light is a pure expression of "there is none else but He", so from it extend miracles, acts that deny the world any significance.

The second light is an expression of His desire that there be a world, so from it extends the natural order of things, a world of elements behaving as though they are directed by their own properties.

But G-d did not want a world where there are two Powers That Be -- one of Nature and one of Supernature. So He made the two lights to play in harmony, to reveal that they both shine from one Source.

How does He do it? Does He blunt the miracles so they could fit into the natural order? Or does He alter the properties of nature to compromise with the miracles?

Neither. Each element acts according to its natural properties, while miracles of the highest order occur.

Impossible? Plant a seed and watch it grow. Plant good deeds and watch with wonder the miracles that ensue.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman (TFreeman@Chabadonline.com)*

## 1992: COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## A Gathering With The Rebbe Eight Years Ago

*Editor's note: this article first appeared in the Vayakhel 5760 (March 3, 2000) issue of Chabadonline.com Magazine*

To build a brick wall you need bricks. To make a watch you need gears, springs and balance wheels. To create a community you need people.

You can't build a lasting building out of half-baked bricks. You can't assemble an accurate timepiece unless each of its components has first been honed to precision. Nor, it would seem, can you put together a perfect world out of imperfect individuals.

The 25th of Adar I, 5752 (February 29, 1992) was a Shabbat like many others for the Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim residing in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York.

Because it was *Shabbat Mevarchim* (the Shabbat preceding the start of a new month in the Jewish Calendar) they joined their Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in his synagogue at 8:30 am to recite the book of Psalms, as is the Lubavitch custom. This was followed by the usual Shabbat morning service, in the course of which the Torah section of *Vayak'hel* (Exodus 35-38) was read. Following the service, some rushed home for a quickly-eaten Shabbat meal. Within the hour they were back, joining those who had remained in the synagogue as well as numerous other community residents who had prayed that morning in other neighborhood *shuls*. By 1:30 p.m., the time that the Rebbe's weekly Shabbat *farbrengen* (gathering) was scheduled to begin, several thousand Chassidim crowded the large room at 770 Eastern Parkway.

Shortly thereafter, the Rebbe entered. For the next three hours he spoke, expounding on a variety of Torah subjects. In the short intermissions between his talks, the Chassidim sang and raised small plastic cups of wine to say *lechaim* to the Rebbe. A Shabbat like many others for the Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim of Crown Heights.

In one of his talks, the Rebbe dwelled on the fact that the Torah reading of the day, *Vayakhel*, is on many years read together with another section, *Pikudei*. Because of the varying length of the Jewish year, the annual Torah reading cycle includes certain sections that are sometimes combined with each other to form into a single reading. An interesting feature of these potential "pairs" is that often their names express opposite meanings. For example, *Nitzavim*, which means "standing," is often

joined to *Vayeilech*, which means "going."

*Vayakhel* and *Pikudei* form one of these paradoxical pairs: *Vayakhel*, which begins by telling how Moses assembled the Children of Israel, means "And he assembled" and is related to the word *kehillah*, "community"; *Pikudei*, which begins with an audit of the Sanctuary's components, means "the counted things" and "the remembered things"--the emphasis on the item within the whole and the individual within the community.

In other words, explained the Rebbe, *Vayakhel* and *Pikudei* express the contrasting values of community and individuality, and the need to unite the two: to build a community that fosters, rather than suppresses, the individuality of its members; and to cultivate an individuality that contributes to, rather than conflicts with, the communal whole.

Then the Rebbe asked a question: If that is the case, why does *Vayakhel* come before *Pikudei*? Don't we first need to develop and perfect the individual, before hoping to make healthy communities out of him and his fellows?

But this, the Rebbe explained, is the Torah's very point: Make communities, even before you have perfect individuals. People are not bricks or gears, which must be individually forged to perfection before they can be assembled together in a constructive way. People are souls, with the potential for perfection implicit within them. And nothing brings out a soul's potential as much interacting and uniting with other souls. Imperfect individuals, brought together in love and fellowship, make perfect communities.

The *farbrengen* having ended, those who had not yet done so went home for the Shabbat meal; they, too, had to hurry, as the short winter day was already drawing to a close. As soon as Shabbat was over, a group of scholars (called *chozrim*, or "repeaters") gathered to recall and write down the Rebbe's words (it being Shabbat, no electronic recording devices were employed at the *farbrengen*). Within 24 hours, the Rebbe's words were transcribed, translated into half a dozen languages, and faxed to hundreds of Chabad-Lubavitch centers around the world. The Rebbe's Chassidim now had "material" to study, disseminate and implement until next Shabbat's *farbrengen*, if the Rebbe did not deliver a weekday address before then (as he often would).

But on Monday afternoon, 27 Adar I, 5752 (March 2, 1992), the Rebbe suffered a stroke that paralyzed his right side and, most devastatingly, robbed him of the ability to speak. There was no *farbrengen* on the following Shabbat, nor on the Shabbat after that. In the summer of 1994, the Rebbe's soul ascended on high, orphaning a generation.

The Rebbe's Chassidim are still waiting for the next *farbrengen*. In the meantime, they're making communities.



## 1993: PAIN ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## The Blow

How to describe the feeling of a parent who has just been told that a malignant tumor is destroying the brain of his ten-year-old child? The doctor had suggested several possible approaches to treatment, but had been brutally honest about the chances. All that Eli and Sharon could realistically expect was a few more painful months of life for their Menasheh.

And then, in the wee hours of a sleepless night, Eli thought of the Rebbe. Both he and Sharon were raised in non-observant homes, but in recent years they had found themselves becoming more involved in Torah learning and practice. It all began at a lecture they had attended at the Chabad House in their Paris neighborhood, where they had first been exposed to the Rebbe's teachings. For the first time in their lives, the faith of their fathers was presented to them as a vibrant guide to a life of meaning and fulfillment. While Eli and Sharon would scarcely describe themselves as "religious," much less as "Chassidim," they developed a deep respect for the Rebbe and began keeping several basic mitzvot such as Shabbat, kashrut, and tefillin.

Eli had heard the stories of those who had been helped by the Rebbe's blessing. Now he grasped at the idea of writing to the Rebbe as his only hope in a sea of despair. If only the Rebbe would promise a speedy recovery for Menasheh!

A few days later, the telephone rang in Eli's home. It was the Rebbe's secretary, who reported that the Rebbe's reply to their note was, "I will mention it at the gravesite."

"What does that mean?" asked Eli.

"It means that the Rebbe will pray for you at the gravesite of his father-in-law, the Previous Rebbe, where he prays for all of those who send in requests for a blessing."

"But I wanted the Rebbe's blessing... I wanted him to tell us that Menasheh will recover..."

"But the Rebbe has given you his blessing. This is his standard reply to such requests. Chassidim regard a promise from the Rebbe to pray for them as a guarantee that everything will be all right."

Eli replaced the receiver somewhat reassured. Still, he

had expected something more definitive, more committal. But if the Rebbe's secretary says that he has received the Rebbe's blessing...

Meanwhile, Menasheh's condition continued to deteriorate. The treatments brought much pain and little relief. Soon he had to be hospitalized. Helplessly, the parents watched the life drain out of their child.

Eli called the Rebbe's office. "Look, I know that we already received the Rebbe's blessing, but it doesn't seem to be helping. Menasheh has gone from bad to worse. The doctors say that every day is a miracle... Perhaps we can ask again? Maybe the Rebbe can say something more definite..." The secretary agreed to "send in" a note.

The reply came within an hour, but it was the same reply as before—"I will mention it at the gravesite." And the doctors had nothing good to report.

The following evening, Eli entered his darkened apartment for two hours of fitful rest. Sharon was at the hospital. Soon he would replace her, so that she could catch some sleep. He sank into the sofa, kicked off his shoes, and scanned the disordered room. Medical papers on the table, clothes strewn about, half-finished meals. Then his eyes lighted on the Rebbe's picture, hanging above the mantelpiece. The Rebbe was smiling.

A tide of rage rose in him. Menasheh lies dying in the hospital, and you're smiling! Unthinkingly, Eli reached for one of the shoes on the floor. There was a crash, a spray of shattering glass, and the picture tumbled to the floor...

Two years later, on a Sunday morning in Brooklyn, a father and son stood in line together with thousands of others waiting to see the Rebbe. As the long line snaked past the Rebbe, the Rebbe handed each a dollar bill to give in his name to charity, uttered a few words of blessing, and turned to the next in line. In this manner, the Rebbe devoted a few seconds to each of the tens of thousands who came from all over the world to meet him.

The Rebbe gave the father a dollar, and then turned to the child. "So this is Menasheh," he said with a smile. "How is he?" It took Eli several seconds to respond. How does the Rebbe know them? This was their first time in New York, and except for those two brief letters back then... "He is fine, thank G-d," Eli finally managed, "a complete recovery. The doctors said it was a miracle. Thanks to the Rebbe's blessing."

"Thank G-d, thank G-d," said the Rebbe; and then, quietly: "I still feel the blow..."

## 1994: DEATH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## Six Years Ago

*Editor's note: this article first appeared in the Korach 5760 (July 7, 2000) issue of Chabadonline.com Magazine*

I remember hearing the news early Sunday morning (Israeli Time) and rushing to the airport. I remember arriving at the cemetery hours after the funeral, in midst of the throng still pouring in, as it would through the night and the days and nights to follow, from all over the world.

We (my wife, my 20-month-old daughter and myself) came with the clothes on our back thinking we'd be heading back home to Jerusalem that very night, when the specially chartered flight was scheduled to return. Instead, we stayed seven days, most of which I spent holed up in an office at 770 Eastern Parkway working on a special issue of *Week In Review*, a weekly digest of the Rebbe's teachings which I edited at the time. I remember observing with growing amazement what was happening--and what was not happening--in the Chabad-Lubavitch community.

Just about everything imaginable was happening--except for the natural, predictable thing which everyone expected to happen.

There was shock and incredulity. There was grief and agony. There was passionate disagreement and fervent expectation and many, many unanswered and unanswerable questions.

But there was not despair. There was not paralysis. Every one of the Rebbe's emissaries, disciples and followers was saying to himself, what should I be doing now? And doing it.

I remember thinking: The Rebbe, who has redefined virtually every aspect of life, has also redefined death.

Such was the Rebbe's way. He would, for example, consider the concept "work". With sure and lucid steps, drawing on the wisdom of Torah and the truth of everyday experience, he would show that work equals cre-

ativity, creativity equals human partnership with the Creator, and human partnership with the Creator is the *raison d'être* of human life.

This truth, of course, was stated thousands of years ago by the Scriptural verse, "Man is born to toil." But that statement, which had always struck us as a melancholy if inescapable fact of life, became, in the Rebbe's hands, the key to understanding what makes us tick and to achieving meaningfulness and fulfillment in our daily labors.

He did the same with "marriage," "love," "rain" and "rockets". He would take a natural phenomenon, a cultural curiosity, an everyday activity, and by the time he had finished analyzing and applying it, it was something altogether different. No--it was the very same thing it always was, but in the clarity of his insight its essence was exposed, revealing how scant and shallow was our previous conception.

In one of his talks, the Rebbe quoted the Talmudic dictum that "Sleep is one sixtieth of death." Well, said the Rebbe, if sleep is a form of death, then death is a form of sleep. Sleep is not a termination or even an interruption of life--it is a time of foment, the means by which body and soul to recoup their energies for a fresh and refreshed onslaught upon the coming day. So is death. Death, said the Rebbe, is a "descent for the sake of ascent," a retraction of the arrow of life so that it can be impelled by the bow of vacuity with redoubled force.

How? When? Why? The unanswered questions remain unanswered. But we know what we need to do. And we're doing it. You can go see for yourself--if you reside on planet earth, chances are that you are within driving distance of a Chabad-Lubavitch center.

The Rebbe has trained us well.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com)*

**1995: LIFE AFTER DEATH ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Life After Death*

It turns out that lots of people believe in life after death. Two polls conducted by The Gallup Organization report that 79% of Americans believe that after they die their souls will be judged and sent to heaven or to hell, and that 33% believe in ghosts. An Internet poll informs us that 38% of those responding believe in reincarnation (though only 26% think that they themselves will be accorded that privilege).

There's a mixed message in these surveys. While they express a certain optimism regarding continuity of our precious selfhood, they also imply that our present state of existence is doomed to obsolescence. We may live on as a basking or roasting soul, a spooky apparition, or the neighbor's cat; but at a certain point, common wisdom has it, life as we know it will come to an end.

Jewish tradition has a more encouraging scenario. While the Jewish concept of the hereafter includes heaven and hell (though a very different heaven and hell than the cloud-borne country clubs and the subterranean fire pits depicted in New Yorker cartoons), reincarnation and even dybuks, its central feature is *techiat hameitim*, the vivification of the dead. *Techiat hameitim* states that in the messianic age our souls will be restored to our resurrected bodies. In other words, life as our own soul inhabiting our own body--basically the life we know today--will resume.

But the sages of the Talmud go even further than that, stating that there is a level on which life extends beyond death without interruption. "Moses did not die," they categorically state; "Our father Jacob did not die," despite the fact that "the eulogizers eulogized, the embalmers embalmed, and the gravediggers buried." Lest one interpret these statements allegorically, Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105, the greatest of the biblical and talmudic commentators) explains, "He seemed to them as if dead, but in truth he was alive."

Chassidic master Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi explains that life as we know it can indeed survive death; the question is only what sort of life is it that we know before death.

When do you feel most alive? What is life to you--a good cup of coffee, the smell of baking bread, a stroll in the park on a sun-kissed day? Or is it the experience of seeing a project you've labored over for months finally come to fruition, or when struggling to explain something to your child the light of comprehension suddenly comes on in his eyes?

Life's pleasures are many and varied, but they can be divided into two general categories: the satisfaction of a personal need or desire, or the achievement of a certain impact on the lives of others. The first category offers many gratifying moments; but nothing can equal the fulfillment that comes when you make a difference in others' lives, when the world becomes different--better, smarter, holier--because of something you've done.

The first category ceases with the interruption of physical life. Once you're dead and buried, there are no more strolls in the park. But your impact on the world continues. If you taught something to someone, that person is now teaching it to someone else. If you acted kindly to someone, that person still feels good about it, is a better person for it, and is acting more kindly to others. If you made the world a better place, that improvement is now being built upon to make the world an even better place.

So does "life as we know it" extend beyond death? That depends on what you know life as. If life, to you, is getting the most you can of its resources for yourself, you have a limited time in which to get as much as you can, and then the fat lady sings and the curtain falls. If life, to you, is making a difference in the lives of others, you're going to live forever.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com); based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

1996: ABSENCE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

## A Time of Silence

A parable:

A father answers the questions of his child and they are happy together, in joyful dialogue.

Then the child asks a question, and the father must think deeply -not just for the answer, but to reach to the essence of this answer so he may bring it to the world of his child. For a long while, the father is quiet.

And so, the child becomes anxious and begins to cry. "Father, where are you? Why do you no longer talk to me? Why have you deserted me for your own thoughts?"

And then the father begins to speak, but this time it is the deepest core of his mind that flows into the mind and heart of the child. Such a flow that with this the child, too, may become a father.

The child is us. The time of silence is now.

When the spirit of Man is dark, when the flow gates of Above seem all but sealed, prepare for liberation.



*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
(Tfreeman@Chabadonline.com)*



**1997: CONFUSION ACCORD-  
ING TO THE REBBE**

The Right Not To  
Know

Knowledge is power," goes the knowing cliché. Like most clichés, this is true. If you knew what your bargaining partner's fallback position was; if you knew whether or not she really loves you; you'd be more in control, more the master of your fate.

But only up to a point. Imagine that you knew everything. Imagine that you knew exactly when and exactly how you will die. That you knew, in advance, the details of every twist and turn in your marriage—the cause of every quarrel and the timing of every reconciliation. Imagine that all the actions you will take in the course of your lifetime were listed like entries in a giant captain's log, with the results of each action noted at its side.

Would you feel that you were in control of your life? Or would you feel like a pawn being walked through the steps? Knowledge may bring power, but absolute knowledge brings utter powerlessness.

In the 49th chapter of Genesis we read how Jacob, before his passing, summoned his sons to his bedside, promising to reveal "that which will happen to you in the end of the days." When they gather round, he blesses them and assigns to each his role as the progenitor of a tribe within the people of Israel. Nothing, however, about what will happen in the end of the days.

Our sages explain that Jacob intended to reveal to them the time of the coming of Moshiach (the Messiah). But at that moment, "the Divine Presence departed from him." Jacob understood that he's not supposed to tell.

So life's most urgent question remains a mystery. We know that the world will one day come to reflect the infinite goodness and perfection of its Creator. We know that our every positive deed is a step toward that goal, a brick in that glorious edifice. But when will it happen? Why can't we see the finish-line approaching, why can't we behold the rising edifice?

Some would say that this is G-d's way of keeping us

under His thumb, so to speak. Perhaps if we knew too much, if we saw exactly how our every action and choice fitted in the master plan, we might take too many liberties, developing our own assessments of the goal and our own ideas on how to get there. So better keep man in the dark, so that he plod on toward his destiny in oblivion.

The truth, however, is the very opposite. It is precisely because G-d desired a creative, independent-minded partner to His endeavor, that He made life the mystery that it is. If we were consciously aware of the ultimate significance of our every action, our actions would be lifeless and mechanical—rehearsed lines recited by rote in a play whose script has already been read by every member of the audience.

It is only because each of our deeds, choices and decisions stands out in stark relief against the background of our lives, its train of causes and effects trailing off into the darkness of an unknown future, that our choices are truly ours, our decisions a true exercise of will, and our every deed is a meaningful contribution to our partnership with G-d in creation.

*By Yanki Tauber (editor@chabadonline.com) based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**1998: CALLOUSNESS ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***Anesthetized*

G-d saw the fire and the ice, the storm and the narrow straits that plague our final journey, and He knew that no soul could bear such pain. So He anesthetized our souls. Our love and fear, our sensitivity to anything G-dly -- all that was put to sleep. Only the very core, our essential connection to Above was left intact.

There is a positive side to this frozen state: The deepest wonders are open to us. Wonders that souls of an earlier generation would never have been able to approach out of awe and inspiration. At the core of the wisdom of Torah lies an unbearable fire. We can walk through it now, without even knowing its heat.

*From the wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe;  
words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman  
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**1999: JUDAISM'S UNIVERSAL MESSAGE ACCORDING  
TO THE REBBE**

## The Discovery of Planet Earth

I want to tell you about the greatest discovery of the millennium. It wasn't the printing press. It wasn't America. It wasn't even vaccination. The greatest discovery of the millennium happened near its very end.

It was the discovery of Planet Earth.

We were trying to get away from Planet Earth--ever since we had to leave the garden. We built temples reaching to the heavens, to transcend our earthly bounds. Cities to lock out the earth's wildness, as though we were not a part of it. We told her she was a dark and lowly place, that we needed to escape her to reach our destiny. We ravaged her, raped her, paved her. Our dreams were dreams of overcoming Earth.

Until finally, in the ultimate of all dreams, we escaped her. We told her, "Earth, we don't need you anymore! After all, you are just one little planet in an awesome universe! We are going out there to conquer planets bigger and better than you. We shall become masters of the stars, of the galaxies!"

We got to the moon. The moon was barren. We sent probes to Mars. Mars was dead. To the icon of beauty, to Venus. She was dressed in poisonous, burning clouds. And then the pockets of American Congress were also barren to fund our useless dreams.

It was then that we looked back from outer space and discovered something we had never imagined. A shining jewel in the vast darkness. Never before had we known her beauty. The most beautiful planet a mind could dream of.

It was then that we realized everything our spirits ever wanted was here. That we need her and she needs us. Our destiny is hers and hers is ours. For we are one.

We discovered Planet Earth.

We need to save our Planet Earth. There was one other time she was in peril, and then there was only one man who could save her. Not that he was the only righteous man. There were others. There was

Methuselah and his disciples.

But Noah was not just a spiritual man. He was, as the Torah says, "A man of the Earth." According to our tradition, Noah invented the plow.

So, G-d looked down at the world He had made and how its soul had been ripped out of it, and He saw these people who prayed and meditated and transcended the bounds of body and earth, and He said, "You people are not the solution. You are part of the problem. Only Noah, who knows to bond body and spirit, heaven and earth, he alone can save My world."

In our century, during the most horrible crimes of humanity, we have seen how spiritual people were quiet. The ravaging of humanity and of the earth has happened with their permission.

But now we have discovered Planet Earth. We have discovered spiritual fulfillment and G-dliness within her. And we know that if we cannot make peace with her and with each other, we will not survive much longer.

### *The Creed of Noah*

At the dawn of creation, G-d gave the first human being six rules to follow in order that His world be sustained. Later, after the Great Flood, he charged Noah with one more. So it is recounted in the Book of Genesis as interpreted by our tradition in the Talmud. There will come a time, our sages told us, that the children of Noah will be prepared to return to this path. That will be the beginning of a new world, a world of wisdom and peace.

For most of Jewish history, circumstance did not permit our people to spread these principles, other than by indirect means. When the Lubavitcher Rebbe began speaking about publicizing them as a preparation for a new era, he was reviving an almost lost tradition.

What fascinates me is the breathing room they provide. They resonate equally in a hut in Africa or a palace in India, in a school in Moscow or a suburban home in America. They are like the guidelines of a great master of music or art: firm, reliable and comprehensive--but only a base, and upon this base each person and every person may build.

According to the sages of the Talmud, there are 70 families with 70 paths within the great Family of Man. And each individual has his or her path within a

**1999: JUDAISM'S UNIVERSAL MESSAGE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE**

## The Discovery of Planet Earth

path. Yet, there is one universal basis for us all.

Anyone who lives by these rules, acknowledging that they are what G-d wants of us, is considered by our tradition to be righteous. That person is a builder with a share in the world as it is meant to be.

The creed of Noah is a sacred inheritance of all the children of Noah, one that every person on the face of the earth can recite every day. And if enough of us will begin to say these same words every day, we will see a different world very soon. Sooner than we can imagine.

Here is a phrasing of the 'Creed of Noah', according to ancient tradition, with a touch of elaboration:

I, child of Noah,  
caretaker of our precious planet earth,  
accept upon myself the responsibility for peace and oneness in our world,  
as accepted by Adam and by Noah,  
transmitted by Moses and his people over the ages:

1. I will not worship anyone or anything other than the One Creator, who cares for the creatures of our world, renewing the Act of Creation at every moment in infinite wisdom, being life for each thing.

*In this is included prayer, study and meditation.*

2. I will not show disrespect for the Creator in any way.

*This may be seen to include respect for the beauty and life of the Creation.*

3. I will not murder.

*Each human being, just as Adam and Eve, comprises an entire world. To save a life is to save that entire world. To destroy a life is to destroy an entire world. To help others live is*

*a corollary of this principle. Every human being that G-d has created is obliged to provide for others in need.*

4. I will respect the institution of marriage.

*Marriage is a most divine act. The marriage of a man and a woman is a reflection of the Oneness of G-d and His creation. Dishonesty in marriage is an assault on that Oneness.*

4. I will not take that which does not rightfully belong to me.

*Deal honestly in all your business. By relying on G-d, rather than on our own conniving, we express our trust in Him as the Provider of Life.*

6. I will not cause needless harm to any living thing.

*At the outset of his creation, Man was the gardener in the Garden of Eden to "take care of it and protect it." At first, Man was forbidden to take the life of any animal. After the Great Flood, he was permitted to consume meat--but with a warning: Do not cause unnecessary suffering to any creature.*

7. I will uphold courts of truth and justice in my land.

*Justice is G-d's business, but we are given the charge to lay down necessary laws and enforce them whenever we can. When we right the wrongs of society, we are acting as partners in the act of sustaining the creation.*

May the nations beat their swords into plowshares. May the wolf lie down with the lamb. May the earth fill with wisdom as waters cover the ocean floor. And may it be very soon in all of our lifetimes, sooner than we imagine.

*Based on the Rebbe's teachings. Excerpted from a speech delivered by Tzvi Freeman (TFreeman@chabadonline.com) before the 18th International Peace Conference, held in Munich in Fall of 1999.*



**2000: THE MODERN AGE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***The Fifty-Sixth Century*

*In the six hundredth year in the life of Noah... all wellsprings of the great deep burst open, and the windows of heaven were opened...*

Genesis 7:11

The Zohar interprets this verse as a prediction that "in the sixth century of the sixth millennium, the gates of supernal wisdom will be opened, as will the springs of earthly wisdom, preparing the world to be elevated in the seventh millennium."

Indeed, the fifty-sixth century from creation (1740-1840 in the secular calendar) was a time of great discovery and accelerated development, both in the supernal wisdom of Torah and in the earthly wisdom of secular science. This was the century in which the teachings of Chassidism were revealed and disseminated by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov and his disciples. The inner soul of Torah, which until then had been the province of a select number of mystics in each generation, was made accessible to all, imparting a new depth to our understanding of the divine wisdom and infusing vitality and joy into our observance of the mitzvot.

As these supernal revelations poured forth from the windows of heaven, the earthly wellsprings answered in kind. The same century saw an unprecedented eruption of knowledge in all fields of secular science—in mathematics, physics, medicine, technology and the social sciences—revolutionizing all areas of human life.

According to the Zohar, this dual revolution came to prepare the world for the "seventh millennium"—the era of Moshiach, when the six "workday" millennia of history will culminate in an age "that is wholly Shabbat and tranquillity for life everlasting."

*The Shower Before the Flood*

The redemption by Moshiach is many things. It is the gathering of the dispersed people of Israel to the Holy Land, the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) in Jerusalem and the re-establishment of the Temple service. It is mankind's return to G-d and its recommitment to a life of goodness and holiness. It is the end of hunger, war, jealousy and greed; the removal of evil from the heart of man and suffering from G-d's world. It is all of these things because of a basic transformation that our world will undergo: the human mind will comprehend the divine truth.

In its present state, the world conceals the face of G-d. True, the workings of nature bespeak the wisdom and majesty of the Creator, and the processes of history show the hand of divine providence in the affairs of man; yet these are but pinpoints of light penetrating the thick weave of nature's veil. Far more pronounced is the physical world's concealment of the divine truth with the regularity of its cycles, the apparent amorality of its laws and the brute immanence of its being. I am, it proclaims with every proton of its being; I am an existence unto myself, absolute and independent; whatever "higher truth" there might be to existence is just that—a "higher" truth, abstract and immaterial, and quite apart from the "real" world.

But in the age of Moshiach, "knowledge and wisdom will increase" to the point that "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea." The true essence of reality will be revealed; the physical world will be experienced as an expression, rather than an obfuscation, of the absolute, exclusive and all-pervading reality of G-d. And when the world will cease to be perceived as something apart from G-d, all other features of the messianic world will fall into place. Man will endeavor only to know G-d and obey His will; the strife and conflict-ridden existence we now know will be replaced with a perfect peace and harmony—harmony between the various drives and forces within the human soul, harmony between men and nations, and harmony between the Creator and His creation.

This explains how the supernal wisdom that emanated from the "windows of heaven" in the fifty-sixth century served to "prepare the world to be elevated in the seventh millennium." The teachings of Chassidism offer a taste of this futuristic awareness and understanding. Employing the tools of human reason, Chassidism explains to the mind of man and implants in his heart the truth that "there is none else besides Him," that "G-dliness is everything and everything is G-dliness"; it describes the origins, development and inner workings of the soul of man and the manner in which it finds realization and fulfillment through the knowledge of G-d and the actualization of His will; it expounds on man's role in creation and how our deeds transform the very nature of reality, making it more receptive to G-dliness.

Today, our ability to truly comprehend and assimilate these truths is limited by the present state of the human mind and the world that colors its thinking. Yet the revelation of the inner soul of Torah was the drizzle that heralds the deluge, the trickle that marks the beginnings of the great flood that will "fill the world with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea."

*Implement and Illustrator*

Complementing the downpour of divine wisdom from

**2000: THE MODERN AGE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***The Fifty-Sixth Century*

the windows of heaven was an upsurge of earthly knowledge, which the Zohar also considers a prologue to and preparation for the messianic era of knowledge.

On the most elementary level, the scientific revolution prepared the world for the coming of Moshiach by serving as a tool for the dissemination of Torah. Three hundred years ago, a teacher could communicate directly only with those who were within range of his voice; today, his words (and even his image) can be broadcast to billions of people in all parts of the globe. In these and numerous other ways, the scientific advances of the last three centuries have aided and enabled the spread of the divine wisdom on a scale that could not even be envisioned before the "wellsprings of the great deep" burst open in the sixth century of the sixth millennium.

Furthermore, the accelerated development of earthly wisdom has not only brought the knowledge of G-d farther, faster and to more people, it has also enhanced the *quality* of our understanding of our Creator. The scientific revolution has actually enabled us to better appreciate and relate to the divine reality.

For example: integral to our faith is the concept of "specific divine providence" (*hashgachah peratit*): that G-d observes our every act, word and thought and holds us accountable for them; that He is aware and concerned with every event in the universe, from the birth of a star in a distant galaxy to the turn of a leaf in the wind in a remote forest, and that they all figure in His master plan of creation and contribute to its realization.

In earlier generations, the concept of an all-seeing eye that simultaneously observes billions of actions thousands of miles apart from each other, and of a consciousness that is simultaneously aware of innumerable events and their effect upon each other, were beyond the realm of reason. One could believe it absolutely, for faith has the capacity to accept even the most illogical of truths; but one could not rationally relate to it and envision it with the mind's eye. Today, when we can converse with ease with someone ten thousand miles away, when we can watch a spacecraft landing on Mars and use a chip of silicon to compute millions of data a second, it requires no great "leap of faith" to understand that He who imparted such potential in His creation certainly possess-

es it Himself, and in a far greater measure.

Modern science has done more than empower us to do things that were impossible or extremely difficult in earlier times. It has also transformed our very vision of reality, introducing certain concepts into the lexicon of our minds which, in earlier generations, had belonged exclusively to the realm of faith.

*On To the Seventh Millennium*

In both examples cited above, we have seen how the "earthly wisdom" of science serves the revelation of the supernal wisdom, whether as a tool that aids its dissemination or as a model that makes tangible and real what was previously abstract and surreal.

There is, however, a third and more essential way in which the eruption of the "wellsprings of the great deep" has prepared the world for the seventh millennium. A way in which the earthly wisdom is not only a facilitator of the supernal wisdom of Torah, but itself a revelation of G-dliness.

For science is discovering the face of G-d. For the past three hundred years, it has been dissecting the veil of nature to the point that the veil has been becoming more and more transparent, more revealing of the truths it both embodies and conceals.

To cite but one example of many:

In earlier generations, the study of the nature yielded a picture of a multifarious universe. The world was perceived as being comprised of dozens of elements and driven by a number of distinct forces. But the more science developed, the more it uncovered the unity behind the diversity. A hundred "elements" were revealed to be composed of a much smaller number of fundamental building blocks; diverse forces were shown to be but variant mutations of a single, elementary force. Even the differentiation between matter and energy was shown to be but an external distinction between two forms of the same essence. Indeed, science is rapidly approaching the point of being able to demonstrate that the entirety of existence is a singular ray emanating from a singular source.

Of course, the windows of heaven have already unleashed this truth-in the language of Torah thought and Kabbalistic metaphor. Complementing this revelation, the scientist is currently formulating this truth in mathematical equations and demonstrating it in state-of-the-art atom smashers.

From above and from below, our world has been primed for the Age of Knowledge.

*Based on the talks and writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber. Originally published in Week In Review (www.meaningfullife.com)*

## 2001: COMBATING TERRORISM ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### Wanton Hatred, Wanton Love

*Editor's note: While no one can presume to know what the Rebbe would have said and done in the wake of the September 11 attacks, this article, in my belief, captures the gist of the Rebbe's approach to facing evil in our world.*

Standing only a few hours before Rosh Hashanah, when we pray to G-d to demonstrate His mercy to the entire world, please allow me to share with you some reflections about the recent events that have so affected us.

We all look for consolation and we seek to console. But the sheer enormity of the evil we just experienced is so hideous, so repellent, we're left with no words.

Of course, we stand behind our military, our intelligence agencies and our elected leaders in their efforts to eradicate this evil.

But we shy away from personally looking this evil straight in the eye, we shrink from taking it on. Timidly, we prod and encourage each other to "return to normal life."

For how could anyone of us purport to combat something so grotesque and so awesome?

I'd like to propose, though, that we can and need to do just that.

Much has been written about the motivation, the conditioning, the bloodcurdling ruthlessness, the precision of last week's crimes against humanity.

All accounts and hypotheses point to the same simple truth: The primary motivation, the underlying force behind every action executed by last week's murderers was: Hatred.

Pure, unbridled, blind, indiscriminate Hatred. Hatred of freedom, Hatred of democracy, Hatred of "infidels," Hatred of Jews, Hatred of anything and everything besides the murderers themselves. Wanton, simple hatred.

It is this that we must combat. It is this that we must eradicate.

What is the remedy to Wanton Hatred? The Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory answered this many times, with clarity and certitude: Wanton Love.

Raw, cold-blooded, fanatical, baseless, relentless hatred can be matched and combated only with pure, indiscriminating, uninhibited, unyielding, baseless, unsolicited love and acts of kindness.

But we need not just plain love. We need love that costs us. Love that we get nothing back for.

The barbarians willingly gave up their lives to sow their hatred. We need to be willing to lose sleep, to suffer losses, to be uncomfortable, to sacrifice our pleasures, in order to help another human being -- with at least the precision, determination and passion that Evil's compatriots of last week employed to fulfill their mission of hate.

Every one of us can make a difference.

The Rebbe would always quote the Maimonidean adage: Each person should see himself as though the entire world is on a delicate balance and with one deed he or she can tip the scales.

Only a few handfuls of terrorists turned our world upside down. Let us not underestimate the power of each of us to turn it upright again.

Every good act, every expression of kindness and love, will be a thousand antibodies to neutralize the viruses put in place by the forces of evil.

In response to darkness, we will fill the earth with light. To defeat evil we will saturate our globe with good.

And when we do our part G-d will surely do His part to protect us and transform our world to the one we all hope and yearn for, one that will be filled with His glory, like the waters fill the ocean.

*By Zalman Shmotkin (zshmotkin@chabadonline.com);  
Rabbi Shmotkin is director of ChabadOnline.com*



## 2002: EARNING A LIVING ACCORDING TO THE REBBE

### Our Daily Bread

Your place is the wilderness. The bread you eat falls from heaven. The basket you collect it in is your attitude.

Clutch your basket tight and your manna will have no place to rest. Open it up and look to the heavens and your basket will always be full.

You have today's meal before you on the table and sit and fret over what will be tomorrow — and you claim you are “just being practical.” This is not being practical — this is confusion.

Every day you are nourished straight from His full, open and overflowing hand. Everything in between — all your work and accounts and bills and receivables and clientele and prospects and investments — all is but a cloud of interface between His giving hand and your soul, an interface of no real substance which He bends and flexes at whim.

If so, if He is feeding you today, and He has fed you and provided all you need and more all these days, what concerns could you have about tomorrow? Is there then something that could stand in His way? Could He possibly have run out of means to provide for you?

Take your focus off the measured channels by which you receive and place your eyes on the Infinite Source of Giving. The Source has no lack of channels.

The reason you have a business is to reconnect all these fragments back to their Creator. And the gauge of your success is your attitude.

If you see yourself as a victim of circumstance, of competitors, markets and trends, that your bread is in the hands of flesh and blood...

...then your world is still something separate from your G-d.

But if you have the confidence that He is always with you in whatever you do and the only one who

has the power to change your destiny is you yourself through your own acts of goodness...

...then your earth is tied to the heavens, and since in the heavens nothing is lacking, so too it shall be in your world.

The common conception of how the system works is faulty. They see a career as “making a living.” A career doesn't *make* anything. What you receive is generated above, in a spiritual realm. Your business is to set up a channel to allow all that to flow into the material world.

Every business is the business of a tailor: to make clothes for the blessings that come your way.

You can't alter the size of your blessings by putting them in bigger clothes — on the contrary, they might just be chased away. But neither should the clothes be too short. Because that is the whole purpose: that miracles and blessings should not come into the world stark naked, but be encloded in the natural world. And we are the tailors.

*From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered  
by Tzvi Freeman, [tfreeman@chabadonline.com](mailto:tfreeman@chabadonline.com)*

**2003: THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE REBBE***The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

For 92 years the Rebbe lived in our midst, and in virtually every talk he gave, every letter he wrote and every directive he issued, the theme, the sign-off and the goal was: the coming of Moshiach and the attainment of the Redemption.

This was the Rebbe's objective in every program he launched, every action he initiated and every community he founded: a world devoid of hate and greed, a world free of suffering and strife, a world suffused with the wisdom and goodness of its Creator. No less.

The idea of a universal redemption, heralded by a global leader called Moshiach (the anointed) is a basic tenet of the Jewish faith. The Jew believes that the world which G-d created possesses the potential to fully reflect the infinite goodness and perfection of its Creator. And the Jew believes that the realization of this goal is the purpose for which his or her soul has been placed within a physical body and given life on this earth.

The Rebbe often quoted the great Jewish sage Maimonides, who more than 800 years ago had said: a single deed, a single word, even a single thought, has the power to tip the scales and bring redemption to the world.

The Rebbe explained: because the basic nature of our world is perfect and good, our every good action is real and enduring, while every negative thing is just that — a negative phenomenon, a void waiting to be dispelled. Hence the common equation of evil and good with darkness and light. Darkness, no matter how ominous and intimidating, is merely the absence of light. Light need not combat and overpower darkness in order to displace it — where light is, darkness is not. A thimbleful of light will therefore banish a roomful of darkness.

No matter how dark the world may seem or feel, light is just a single action away.

The Rebbe saw this and imparted to us this vision. If we open our eyes to this reality, we will bring redemption to the world. Today.