

# L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre - Chabad NSW Headquarters

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## Living with the Rebbe



This week we read two Torah portions, Tazria and Metzora. The first portion, Tazria, contains the mitzva (commandment) of brit mila, circumcision. "And on the eighth day shall the flesh of his foreskin be circumcised."

The Midrash relates that our Sages asked a question: If G-d wants Jewish men to be circumcised, why doesn't He create them that way in the first place? Surely it is not beyond the power of an omnipotent Creator to do so.

The reason, they explain, is the principle of tikun, or correction. G-d deliberately creates many things in the world in an incomplete or partial state, for the purpose of the Jew perfecting them. Indeed, this is the Jew's Divine mission: to bring G-d's creation to perfection through Torah and mitzvot.

Of course, G-d doesn't really need our help; He could just as easily have created everything at the very peak of perfection. However, appointing us His "partners" allows us to earn merit and actually "work" for the blessings we receive in life.

When a Jew fulfills his Divinely-ordained mission and imbues the world with holiness, all the goodness G-d bestows upon him - life, children and livelihood - is transformed from a "charitable donation" into his rightful due. G-d isn't giving him a gift; he deserves all these blessings because he has worked for them. At the same time, awareness of this relationship prompts the Jew to want to do even more to fulfill his end of the bargain, for human nature is such that a person hates to be sustained by the "bread of shame." Circumcision is only one example of how we earn this merit.

A similar question may be asked about the seemingly inequitable distribution of wealth in the world. Why does G-d give so much money to some and so little to others? Why can't the poor person receive his sustenance directly from G-d instead of relying on the generosity of others? The answer is that G-d wants the rich man to earn additional merit by giving tzedaka (charity) to the poor. In truth, not all the money in his possession belongs to him; G-d only puts it in his hands so it can be redistributed in a more equitable fashion.

Yes, the more affluent person faces a difficult test, for his evil inclination rises up in protest. But when he overcomes his inclination and gives to the needy, not only does he not forfeit his wealth, but G-d grants him even more in payment for his good deed.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Volume 27*

## TWITTER

Until recently if you asked someone if they "twitter," they'd probably give you a funny look. They might say, "What, do I look like, a bird?" Or they'd be insulted, because "twitter" meant "babble" - basically to yak nonsense. Come to think of it, maybe the definition still applies. But twitter now has a new meaning. "Twitter" is the name of an online service that allows people to send out short messages called "Tweets." They have some value - a kind of electronic news bulletin. Flash! Accident on the motorway. But "Tweets" have also upped the interaction level - one can follow a celebrity's Tweets. Or you can build up your own following. Tweet about your walk from the car to the office. But really, do you need to know that someone down the tweet line hasn't chosen the colour socks to wear? What do tweets have going for them? Well, they have to be short - no more than 140 characters. Tweets also are very present tense, the embodiment of "the fierce urgency of now" - a 20 minute old tweet might as well be 20 years. Tweeting celebrates the instantaneous in communication and awareness of - focus on - the moment. In one sense, Twitter comes as close as we can get to doing and observing at the same time. For we're not just telling ourselves "I am doing this." We're telling as much of the world as we can reach. And that's the other thing about Twittering. It really is a kind of nervous gesture - a self-absorbed self-awareness. Because most of this twittering is about chirping - rapid-fire nonsense that calls attention to ourselves. It's the internet age's equivalent of the attention-getter - go stand in the middle of the street and spit pickles - people will watch you.

Even if we don't get tweets, and don't twitter, we can still learn from the phenomenon - learn an important lesson in our Divine service. Be brief: Time is of the essence, don't waste it. Just as importantly, don't say more than you have to. As Shammai instructed: "Say little and do much." If you're going to "twitter" - make it worthwhile. How much more inspirational if instead of telling your audience about the kind of doughnut you're eating, you shared with them a brief Torah insight, or sent them to an article about the meaning of prayer?

Focus on the here and now: As Hillel said: If not now, when? Seize the moment, by seizing the mitzva (commandment). Here's a Tweet: "Gave a coin to a homeless guy. Helping a little old lady cross the street." That's 74 characters. "Went to minyan. Put on tefilin. And you?" Hey! That's only 41 characters. What Torah Tweet can you send in 62 characters?

Communicate - stay in touch: That applies to acts as simple as calling parents and wishing them "Shabbat Shalom." It also applies to prayer. G-d doesn't need lengthy dissertations. A lot of our prayers and blessings are "tweetable" - short and to the point. "Blessed are you L-rd our G-d King of the Universe, who creates various kinds of food." 85 characters. If you've got time to tweet about a shopping spree, you've got time to say a blessing before eating that ice cream.

Self-aware: If we twitter, we want others to pay attention to us. But that means we need to pay attention to ourselves. Don't do things you wouldn't want twittered about. Rather than focusing on the mundane - twittering about a shoelace, twitter about the self-discoveries, the struggles to grow Jewishly. Let us tweet about how careful we are in the performance of even a minor mitzva - look at me! I was careful with - well, you'll just have to read our Tweet. And you can be sure G-d will be reading

## Aliyot Summery

**General Overview:** The bulk of this week's portion, *Tazria-Metzora*, discusses various forms of *tzara'at*, skin maladies which are contracted as a result of engaging in forbidden gossip. Also discussed are garment discolorations which constitute "clothing *tzara'at*," and the symptoms and laws of "house *tzara'at*," indicated by certain brick discolorations. Following is a discussion of various ritual impurities, including the laws of the menstruating woman.

**First Aliyah:** The Jewish people are instructed regarding the ritual impurity contracted by a woman who gives birth. The timeframe of this period of impurity differs depending whether the child is a boy or girl. At the conclusion of this period, the woman immerses in a *mikvah* and is required to bring certain offerings in the Temple. Incidentally, the Torah mentions the obligation to circumcise a male child on the eighth day of his life. The Torah then begins discussing the laws of *tzara'at*, a skin discoloration -- often inaccurately translated as "leprosy" -- which renders a person ritually impure. This aliyah discusses various forms of white skin discolorations. A person who has the symptoms of *tzara'at* must be seen by a priest. If the discoloration is deemed "suspicious," the priest will immediately declare the individual impure or quarantine him for up to two weeks. At the conclusion of the quarantine period, the priest either declares the individual pure or impure. The Torah then discusses what is done in the event that the *tzara'at* spreads after the individual was declared pure, or if there is raw skin within the *tzara'at*, or if the *tzara'at* has spread over the entire body. We learn the laws of *tzara'at* which appears following an inflammation on the skin.

**Second Aliyah:** We learn the laws of *tzara'at* which appears following a burn to the skin. We discover that *tzara'at* can also affect the areas on the body covered by hair. The symptoms and laws of such a *tzara'at* are quite different than standard *tzara'at*. This section concludes with the laws of a person afflicted by multiple dull white areas on his skin.

**Third Aliyah:** This section discusses *tzara'at* which appears on a bald spot, as well as a white discoloration streaked with red, which can appear anywhere on the body. Also discussed is the procedure followed by an individual who is afflicted with *tzara'at*, the main requirement being that he must remain outside the city until his condition clears up. The Torah then discusses "clothing *tzara'at*," a green or red discoloration which can affect certain types of

materials. The garment is shown to a priest who quarantines it for up to two weeks.

**Fourth Aliyah:** At the conclusion of the quarantine period, depending on the circumstances the garment is either declared pure, or completely burnt, or only the part which was discolored is torn out and burnt. The Torah then describes the purification procedure for a person who contracted *tzara'at*. After the priest determines that the *tzara'at* has been healed, a ceremony involving two birds, a cedar plank, a scarlet thread and water from a live stream, is used for the initial stage of the purification. The individual also shaves his entire body. After a seven day wait, the person shaves again, and brings three animals and an oil offering to the Temple. The priest processes the offerings in the manner prescribed in this section. With this the purification process is completed.

**Fifth Aliyah:** If the individual suffering from *tzara'at* cannot afford the above sacrifices, two birds can be substituted for two of the animals. This section describes the slightly different purification process reserved for the impoverished person.

**Sixth Aliyah:** Homes, too, can be afflicted with *tzara'at*. If bricks on a home become discolored -- acquiring a strong red or green pigment -- a priest is summoned. If indeed the discoloration seems to be *tzara'at*, the priest quarantines the home for up to three weeks. Depending on the spread of the discoloration, the home is either declared to be pure, or the specific bricks are removed from the house, or, in the most extreme situations, the house is demolished. The Torah then describes the purification process for such a home -- which is very similar to the initial stage of the purification of the human afflicted with *tzara'at* (described in the First Aliyah). After concluding the subject of *tzara'at*, the Torah discusses the ritual impurity of a man who issues a sickly and unnatural seminal discharge, as well as the method by which this person attains purity when the condition passes.

**Seventh Aliyah:** This section discusses the ritual impurity contracted by a man who issues a (normal) seminal discharge, the ritual impurity of a menstruating woman, and of a man who cohabits with her. All such people must immerse in a *mikvah* (ritual pool) in order to be purified. Under certain circumstances a menstruating woman was required to bring to the Temple two bird offerings in order to attain purity.

## Thoughts that Count

If a man shall have in the skin of his flesh an eruption, a scab or a bright spot (Lev. 13:2)

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Afflictions are the consequence of seven sins: gossip, bloodshed, an oath taken in vain, sexual transgressions, overbearing pride, theft and envy. (*Talmud, Arachin*)

The priest will see him, he will pronounce him unclean (Lev. 13:3)

The Shpoler Zaide was known as one of the most enthusiastic and spirited disciples of the Maggid of Mezeritch. In the year 1799, during a visit to Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism, he related that he had merited to see the Baal Shem Tov when he was three years old. "The Baal Shem Tov placed his holy hand over my heart, and ever since I've been warm," he explained. From this we learn that the gaze of a righteous person ("the priest shall see him"), the sound of his voice, or in fact any gesture he makes, has far-reaching influence and effect on an individual. (*Otzar HaChasidut*)

And the priest who is cleansing shall cause the man that is to be made clean to stand...at the door of the Tent of Meeting (Lev. 14:11)

The leper who is undergoing purification is allowed a privilege not extended to others who have become spiritually unclean: He was brought to the Holy Temple's Gate of Nikanor and allowed to stick his hand and foot into the inner Temple court, to participate in the offering of the sacrifice he had brought. What was so special about the leper, who had committed so grave a sin as slander against his fellow Jew? After the seven days of seclusion and repentance, the leper was now a baal teshuva, a penitent, and was considered free of all sin. A new "door" in life had opened for him, and thus he was permitted to stand in the very door of the Temple court. (*Der Torah Kvall*)

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



It is customary to study Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, on Shabbat afternoons between Passover and Shavuot. This week's section, Chapter Two, contains the following advice in the name of one of the greatest Jewish Sages, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: "Be as careful in [the performance of a seemingly] minor mitzva as of a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot."

As the Rebbe has explained, there are two aspects to our Torah observance and two types of reward: "The commandments were given solely to allow the creations to become refined." Each one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot causes a different aspect of spiritual purification in the person who performs the mitzva, the physical objects he uses to perform it, and in the world at large. In this sense, the reward G-d gives us for keeping His commandments is greater for certain mitzvot and less for others, according to the specific mitzva's characteristics. At the same time, all mitzvot share something in common in the way we approach them. The Torah's mitzvot are the will of G-d. Whenever we do a mitzva, our motivation is not to bring about its particular spiritual effect but simply to do what G-d wants of us. In that sense, all of the different mitzvot are merely details.

What difference does it make which one we do first? The important thing is to fulfill the will of the Creator. Accordingly, the reward we receive for this aspect of our observance is the same for all the commandments.

Interestingly, the reward we receive for our role in refining the world is limited, just as each mitzva is categorized as "major" or "minor." But the reward for fulfilling G-d's will is beyond limitation - "you do not know" - completely above and beyond our comprehension.

How fortunate we Jews are, as we say at the conclusion of each Chapter, that "the Holy One, Blessed Be He, wished to make the people of Israel meritorious. He therefore gave them Torah and mitzvot in abundant measure."

*Pinchus Feldman*

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

**Smile! Its Friday.** A Jewish man and a Chinese man were conversing. The Jewish man commented upon what a wise people the Chinese are. "Yes," replied the Chinese man, "Our culture is over 4,000 years old. But, you Jews are a very wise people, too." The Jewish man replied, "Yes, our culture is over 5,000 years old." The Chinese man was incredulous, "That's impossible, he replied. Where did your people eat for a thousand years?"

## Happiness against All Odds

Recently, I have had some grief and turmoil in my personal life. The untimely passing of my beautiful 31-year-old cousin, and the circumstances of her death, shook me to the core and "broke" my positive outlook towards life. I had fallen apart and could not put the pieces back together again. A month after this tragic event, I met a person who happened to be a rabbi.

I was born in the Ukraine but raised on Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, sent to yeshiva but we (Russians) as a group, did not really take our religious lessons seriously. I knew a little of my religion but not much about Chasidim. "They are not our brothers," I once heard an Israeli say to my father. "They are our cousins." Ignorance has always shocked me in others, but I have been just as guilty when it came to the Orthodox community.

The secret, or key rather, to breaking through ignorance, is when you get "outside your box." In my case, the shocking death of my cousin broke my "box" completely and for the first time I could comprehend what Chasidut is all about.

Let me start off by saying that I am still not so observant, and no "brainwashing" has occurred. I speak impartially on this subject (as impartial as a human who likes something could possibly be). A friend of my cousin's invited me to a Chabad House after her death to listen to a Kabala class. I was in no mood to go anywhere, but she was sponsoring it in the name of my cousin. I listened, and was closed to all of it as usual. I did hear something that jerked one of my heartstrings. I left and put it away in the back of my mind. Several weeks later, a rabbi walked into my office, and started to talk to me. I didn't say, and wanted to, that I needed some kind of spiritual help because I was hurting and broken and very lost. He told me that nothing happens by accident and he took my phone number to stay in touch.

He called me on several occasions in the next few months that followed and invited me to different functions and Shabbat dinners. Each time I politely refused. I am so not into this whole religion thing. Friday nights in a rabbi's house with religious people is not my

idea of a good time. Give me a good Russian restaurant with a cheerful group of friends and I am there. He never pushed or pressured me, he just said he would call me again some other time. Last year, before Rosh Hashana, the rabbi called again. Though I had plans with friends to go to a Russian restaurant on Brighton Beach and have dinner there, I decided I would go to the rabbi first for an hour and then leave to meet my friends. When I got there, I was surprised to see how many of my acquaintances and even some friends, whom I go to Russian restaurants with, were there. I was pleasantly surprised and a bit shocked really. I expected to see many men in kipot and women in wigs. I saw few. These were my friends and colleagues and neighbors. People who led "secular" lives just like me. Was this some secret thing they did on the side? I called my friends and told them I may not make it to the restaurant.

My new rabbi, Rabbi Danny Finkelman, called the following week to invite me to Shabbat dinner. This time, Friday couldn't come soon enough. I told my friends I had other plans. My expectations were met with flying colors. I loved the warmth of the hosts and the hospitality. Their openness and non-judgmental attitude of anyone who came was shocking to me.

The discussion of the weekly Torah portion interested me at first only out of respect to the rabbi, and I felt like I was in yeshiva all over again. Then I remembered something Rabbi Finkelman told me when he walked into my office. He said that he left religion for a while and lived secularly. He said he thought the Torah had nothing to do with him or his life today. Then he ran into a Chasid and he learned how each line in the Torah pertained to every detail of his life today. I actually started comprehending what Rabbi Danny was talking about and for the first

time, it didn't feel like I was talking to a cousin, I was talking to a brother, because Rabbi Danny was talking to me - a sister.

I started coming almost every Friday and I attended synagogue regularly on Saturday morning to hear Rabbi Danny speak. These were not Bible stories taught to children in yeshiva, these were examples and lessons of how to deal with issues in my daily life: positive examples.

I learned what Chabad is about. I finally learned about Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Rebbe, whose picture I know have proudly hanging in my kitchen and on my office wall.

I learned that through 3,000 Chabad institutions in 78 countries and 48 states, the Rebbe has launched a global campaign to prepare the world for the arrival of the long-awaited Redemption. With his prophetic view of world events, the Rebbe has told us that the day that our grandparents and great-grandparents could only dream of, when nations will not lift up a sword one against another, is close at hand and that all we need to do is do one more good deed to help it happen a moment sooner. In fact the Rebbe is seen by many to be, like Moses in his generation, the leader who will bring about the Redemption.

I learned that the biggest weapon Chabad has to fight anti-Semitism and hatred is happiness. Happiness is the power that makes you do mitzvot (commandments). When you are unhappy, you do not have the urge to do good for yourself, let alone anyone else.

I learned a lot in these past six months. I mainly learned to keep smiling: Even when my heart still breaks about my cousin's untimely death, and I wake up and don't feel like smiling, I force myself to smile and I feel the smile inside later. First I do, and then I learn to feel it. I have learned to try to be happy, against all odds: like a Chasid. The only way to survive! Oh, what a powerful weapon!

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# Moshiaich

Every Jew's soul is an actual part of G-d. Therefore, in the Era of the Resurrection when the essential G-dliness that pervades every dimension of our existence will be revealed, this holiness - the fundamental vitality present in every Jew - will emerge. Our material world will then be G-d's dwelling. Just as a person reveals the innermost dimensions of his personality only in his own home, so too the essence of G-dliness - those dimensions of His Being that transcend even spiritual existence - will be revealed in our material world.

*(Maamar, Kol Yisrael Yesh La'hem Cheilek L'olam Habah, 5733; Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVII, p. 343ff.)*

# It Happened Once

Reb Shlomo was a very wealthy man and a very respectable scholar as well. In fact, he limited his business involvement to enable himself to devote a large portion of his day to the study of Torah. Reb Shlomo's love and fear of G-d was passed down to his son, Reb Hirschel, who devoted himself exclusively to the performance of mitzvot (commandments) and the study of Torah, avoiding all worldly occupation completely. He spent all his days in the study hall and returned home only for Shabbat.

Reb Hirschel had two sons, Chanoch Hendel and Yosef, and each week they would go together to study Torah with their grandfather. To their grandfather's surprise, one week they failed to show up. Reb Shlomo soon found out that his grandsons had decided to pursue the study of Chasidut.

In those early years of Chasidism, there were strong partisans in favor and also opposed to this new manner of divine service which the Baal Shem Tov had introduced into the world. In the entire town where this family lived, there was not even one adherent of Chasidism, and Reb Hirschel's family was violently opposed to the new teachings.

One day the townspeople noticed that the stranger who had arrived there seemed to be one of the Chasidim. Actually, it was his unusually lengthy preparation for the morning prayers which first betrayed him. Then, his actual prayers - why, he was a sight to behold! The cries, the sighs and tears, and ecstatic jumping and swaying... no one had ever seen anything like it.

Chanoch Hendel and his brother were intensely curious to find out the meaning of these strange practices, and they approached the stranger with their questions. They were particularly anxious to know why the man spent so much time on the section of prayer which begins with the Psalm, "Min Hameitzar" (From out of distress...) and describes a Jew crying out to G-d. "How much is there to think about, after all, in this prayer?" they asked him.

The Chasid proceeded to give them an explanation according to the teachings of Chasidut, telling the young men how every Jew is constrained by his own limitation and his own mundane cravings which hinder his attempts to serve the Creator properly. His "animal soul" is forever trying to lure him into the trap of pride and haughtiness, and even when a Jew tries to pray and study, these "adversaries" may cause him to move ever further away from his true goals.

"And so," concluded the Chasid, "when I said the words of 'Min Hameitzer,' I was begging G-d to deliver me from my own limitations, so that I might come closer to Him and a knowledge of G-dliness." The brothers, who were serious and

intense seekers, were deeply impressed with this explanation and inquired where they, too, could learn such lofty concepts. "In the city of Lubavitch," he replied, and that answer was enough for the brothers.

When they failed to appear for their next study session with their grandfather, he assumed that something had come up and paid little attention to it. It was only the following week, when they again didn't come that he decided to discover the reason for their absence. When he was told that they had been seen speaking with the Chasidic stranger, their grandfather understood immediately what had occurred.

Reb Shlomo dispatched a messenger to bring the young men home, but it was too late. They had already arrived in Lubavitch, and were so immersed in the wonders they had discovered there, that no inducement could convince them to return home. They had chosen their true path.

Once, during that first year, the Tzemach Tzedek (Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe) delivered a Chasidic discourse which affected the young Chanoch Hendel so deeply that he fell faint to the floor. Thereafter the Rebbe instructed that he be brought outside during these talks so that he not endanger himself by his soul ascending to such lofty heights.

Many years later, the Rebbe Rashab (Rabbi Sholom Ber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe) sent Reb Chanoch Hendel, now an elder Chasid, to a newly opened branch of the Lubavitcher yeshiva in Zemin to observe its progress and report back to him. Upon his return, he was called to the Rebbe's study and asked what he thought of the new yeshiva. He expressed his concern. "They go on and on so much about Chasidut, they might forget about the 'Giver of the Torah.'" "For Reb Chanoch Hendel, there was nothing other than G-d, and undue intellectualizing could cause a student to fall.

The many stories told about Reb Chanoch Hendel illustrate his utter truth and constant striving. When the young students would stand before the Rebbe Rashab's office waiting for their individual moments with the Rebbe, Reb Chanoch Hendel would say to each of them, with tears streaming down his face, "Children, don't tell the Rebbe what you want to say. Tell the Rebbe what you don't want to mention! The Rebbe will give you a proper tikkun [spiritual correction] and pull you up out of the mud."

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## Candle Lighting Times Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	5:05pm	6:00pm
Brisbane	5:05pm	5:58pm
Surfers Par	5:03pm	5:56pm
Melbourne	5:25pm	6:21pm

Dedicated in honour of the birth of  
**Chana Gopin** (shetichye)  
To Parents Shmuly and Chaya Gopin  
Dedicated by the Krinsky and Gopin Families

"Dear Katriel

This letter is in recognition of the great work you did with my financial planning. A big thank you to you for the excellent work you did in consolidating my super funds into one that was suited to my needs and budget, and also ensuring I have the appropriate insurance coverage that is right for me and my family. You have saved me hundreds of dollars per year. I am looking forward to continuously working closely with you.

Yours faithfully, (name withheld)"

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