



# L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre – Chabad NSW Headquarters  
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## Living with the Rebbe



In this week's Torah portion, Toldot, we read of how Isaac wanted to bless Esau but was prevented from doing so by Rebecca, his wife. It was through her intervention that the blessings were bestowed upon Jacob instead.

A fundamental question is raised by this incident. How could Isaac have possibly preferred Esau over Jacob? True, our Sages tell us that Esau repeatedly tried to deceive his elderly father into thinking he was G-d-fearing and observant, by pointedly asking questions about religious law, but it is still hard to imagine Isaac being fooled by Esau's ruse. In fact, when Jacob presented himself to receive his father's blessings, Isaac declared that "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Isaac recognized how unusual it was for Esau to address him in such a civil manner or even to bring G-d's name into the conversation. Isaac surely realized that something was amiss. But if Isaac was well aware of Esau's serious shortcomings, why did he nevertheless want to give the blessings only to him?

The truth is that Esau, the firstborn twin, possessed an extremely lofty soul capable of incredible spiritual accomplishments. In certain respects, Esau was on an even higher spiritual level than his brother Jacob. Jacob was born to be a "dweller in tents (of Torah)," protected from the outside world, enclosed within the four walls of the yeshiva. Esau, however, was "a man of the field," blessed with the spiritual strength to venture forth into the coarser material world to wage war against evil and impurity, bringing G-dliness and holiness down into the physical realm. It was Esau, therefore, who possessed the greater spiritual might.

This, then, explains Isaac's desire to bless Esau, despite his knowledge that his son was abusing these spiritual gifts: Isaac hoped his blessings would cause Esau's considerable talents to be brought out and revealed. Not only would Esau repent of his evil ways, but the entire world would benefit from his actions.

G-d, however, knew it was too late for Esau to repent and live up to his potential. Instead, the blessings were given to Jacob, and with them, the power to overcome evil and transform it into good, and to illuminate the world with the light of Torah.

*Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

## Be Jealous - Don't Be Envious

We all know that it's a terrible thing to be jealous. After all, jealousy is akin to coveting, and the Ten Commandments tells us not to covet!

But is there, perhaps a place for this seemingly natural human trait?

Jewish teachings explain that we should be jealous of another's spiritual accomplishments - his Jewish education, his observance of mitzvot (commandments), etc. But, we are told, we should not envy another's material success.

The explanation seems obvious: Our jealousy of another's spiritual accomplishments - our desire to achieve what someone else has achieved - will motivate us to work harder, to do the things necessary to reach the same level. Clearly, one doesn't become a scholar by sleeping. Even a genius has to work at it. And when it comes to observing mitzvot, well, that takes dedication, motivation - a real commitment. If we want what they've got, we've got to do what they did.

Not only that, but disputes over Torah, if done within the confines of Jewish law and thought, benefit all concerned. We need the discussion, the back-and-forth, the challenges of another to make sure our thinking, our reasoning, our understanding are all going in the right direction. When it comes to learning Torah, being jealous leads to an action that benefits all, because our spiritual accomplishments - getting what the other one's got - can't take away or diminish those of the other person. We can only enhance them.

On the other hand, if we envy another's material success, we might think that their riches diminish ours. We might think that while competition among scholars is a good thing, competition is bad for business. In short, envying someone's material success turns business - earning a livelihood - into a "zero sum game." There can only be one winner. When you gain, I lose, and vice versa.

Aside from all the obvious trouble such an attitude can cause, it's simply not true. One's livelihood comes from G-d, and G-d being Infinite, doesn't play a zero-sum game. He can, and does, provide the livelihood for each individual according to His wisdom. What one person makes does not alter what G-d has decided, for His own reasons, what another should earn.

There's a story about the great tzadik (righteous person) Reb Meir of Premishlan that exemplifies this concept.

A man once complained to Reb Meir that someone else was taking away his livelihood. Reb Meir responded with an analogy. "When a horse drinks from a river," Reb Meir explained, "it stamps its hooves in the edge of the water. Why? Because the water is like a mirror. When the horse lowers its head to drink, it sees another horse. Envy of the 'other horse' overcomes it, and it stamps in anger, chasing away the other horse because it doesn't want the other horse to drink up the water. But you know that there is enough water in the river for many horses."

The same is true about our livelihoods. Our "horses" - the animal within us - may envy another, may think that the other person will drink up all our "water." We know better.

## Aliyot Summary

**General Overview:** In this week's reading, *Toldot*, Jacob and Esau are born. Isaac relocates to Philistine where he digs wells, resulting in friction between him and the locals. Rebecca and Jacob successfully deceive Isaac, tricking him into giving to Jacob the blessings he had intended for Esau.

**First Aliyah:** Rebecca had trouble conceiving. Isaac and Rebecca prayed for children, and after twenty years of marriage Rebecca became pregnant. She was concerned about her exceedingly difficult pregnancy, and was advised by G-d that this was due to two children – two nations – struggling in her womb. She gave birth to twin boys: a hairy, ruddy boy named Esau, and a second son, born clutching his brother's heel, named Jacob. Esau became a hunter, while Jacob was an honest man who frequented the schools of Torah. Isaac favored Esau, while Rebecca preferred Jacob. One day, Esau came home from the field hungry, and pleaded with Jacob to give him some of the stew he was cooking. Jacob agreed to Esau's request provided that he give him his birthright as firstborn in exchange—and Esau acceded to this barter. There was a famine in Canaan, and Isaac was escaping the famine by traveling to Egypt via Philistine when G-d told him to remain in Philistine. G-d also informed Isaac that he would visit upon him all the blessings He had promised to Abraham.

**Second Aliyah:** Isaac settled in Philistine. When the townspeople inquired regarding his wife, he told them that she was his sister, fearing that otherwise the Philistines would kill him in order to take Rebecca. Eventually, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, noticed that Rebecca was Isaac's wife and though he reprimanded Isaac, he issued a decree that no one touch them. While in Philistine, Isaac sowed crops, and miraculously harvested a hundred times more than a field's normal yield.

**Third Aliyah:** Isaac became extremely wealthy. He also re-dug some of the wells that his father Abraham had dug, but had since been stopped up by the Philistines. The Philistines eventually became envious of his wealth, and asked him to leave. Isaac complied, moving away from the city and settling

in the Gerar Valley. There, Isaac's servants dug two new wells but the Philistines contested his ownership over these wells. The third well he dug was uncontested.

**Fourth Aliyah:** G-d appeared to Isaac and blessed him and assured him that He would always be with him. Abimelech approached Isaac and requested to enter into a peace treaty with him.

**Fifth Aliyah:** Isaac agreed to Abimelech's request. On that day, Isaac's servants informed him that they had successfully dug another well. At the age of forty, Esau married two wives. Their idolatrous ways anguished Isaac and Rebecca. Isaac had now advanced in age, and he became blind. He summoned Esau and told him that he wished to bless him, but first he should go to the field and hunt some game for him to eat. Rebecca heard this conversation and advised Jacob to don Esau's clothing and trick Isaac into blessing him instead. Rebecca prepared meat and gave it to Jacob to bring to his father. She also took hairy goatskin and put it on Jacob's smooth arms and neck. Jacob approached his father and presented himself as Esau, and Isaac ate from the repast Rebecca had prepared.

**Sixth Aliyah:** Isaac blessed Jacob with the "dew of the heaven and the fat of the earth," and granted him mastery over his brother. No sooner than the blessing ended, Esau arrived from the field, only to be informed by his father – who now understood what had transpired – that the blessing was already given to his younger brother. Esau was furious and Isaac comforted him with a minor blessing. Esau was determined to kill Jacob, but Rebecca, who got wind of this plot, asked Isaac to send Jacob to Charan to find a wife. Isaac did so, and blessed Jacob again before he departed.

**Seventh Aliyah:** Isaac sent Jacob to his brother-in-law Laban's home, to marry one of his daughters. Esau married again, this time to Machalat the daughter of Ishmael.


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*Keynote Speaker*

Rabbi Yehoshua B. Gordon resides in Encino, California where he has been the Spiritual Leader of Chabad of Encino for the past 35 years, he was ordained in 1971 at the Rabbinical College of Canada in Montreal.

In the spring of 1973, he and his wife Deborah were appointed by The Lubavitcher Rebbe as his personal emissaries to the San Fernando Valley region. They established Chabad of the Valley which is comprised of some 30 Rabbis and their families assisted by their support staff in 22 centers throughout the greater Valley. Rabbi Gordon is a well known teacher, orator and lecturer who was endowed with an incredible sense of humor. He has traveled the world speaking to diverse groups in places as distant and as exotic as Anchorage and Fairbanks Alaska, Hong Kong, South Africa, Israel and many cities throughout North America.

For more info contact Rabbi Elimelech Levy @ info@yeshiva.org.au or 0433 549 190

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



Every year at this time we read about one of the most famous sets of twins in history, Jacob and Esau. As any child can tell you, Jacob was the "good" one and Esau was the "bad" one, and the two brothers never got along with each other. But the Torah is not a history book; Torah means "teaching," it contains eternal lessons that are always relevant and have a direct impact on our daily lives.

On a deeper level, Jacob and Esau represent two ways of looking at the world, two different life styles that even modern man is forced to choose between. Esau's attitude was "carpe diem" - seize the day, with no thought for tomorrow. Jacob, by contrast, lived a more elevated existence, recognizing life's spiritual dimension.

According to Chasidic philosophy, every Jew is made up of two souls: an animal soul and a G-dly soul. Like Jacob and Esau, they too never get along, and are in constant conflict. The animal soul is interested only in the physical; like an animal that walks on four legs, its head is focused downward rather than up at the sky. The only thing that matters is the here and now. The G-dly soul, however, looks upward. Why am I here? What's the real purpose of my life?

As we learn from this week's Torah reading, the true birthright belongs to Jacob, and our function as Jews is to elevate the world by imbuing it with G-dliness. The battle will always be there, but it's a battle we can win by choosing wisely.

*Pinchus Feldman*  
Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

## Smile its Friday

One early winter morning, Rabbi Bloom was walking beside the canal when he saw a dog in the water trying hard to stay afloat. It looked so sad and exhausted that Rabbi Bloom jumped in and after a struggle managed to bring it out alive. A passer by saw this and said, "That was very brave of you. Are you a vet?" Rabbi Bloom replied, "Of course I'm a vet? I'm a freezing cold as well."

**Save the date! 22<sup>nd</sup> December - Chanukah in the City – Giant Menorah lighting in Martin Place fantastic program – more info coming soon**

## Friday Lights by Joyce Brooks Bogart

TGIF never rang truer than when my husband and I began to observe the Jewish Sabbath - from Friday sundown to Saturday nightfall. I used to be a 24/7 kinda gal, always available for work, friends and family. As my husband and I got busier and saw less and less of each other, Shabbat seemed like an opportunity to focus on each other, and chill at home on the beach. We had become slaves to our schedules and didn't even realize how badly we needed time off. We were already kosher, we celebrated Shabbat with Friday night family gatherings - I made challah, lit the candles, etc. And we would occasionally drive to Shabbat services on Saturday.

We made the jump from not observing Shabbat to shomer (observing) Shabbat when I started a new job for a religious organization that expected me NOT to work on Shabbat. (Sundays were fair game if we were under the gun). I attended a women's conference and the focus at the conference was to undertake a new mitzva (commandment), a new commitment, and since I was pretty much as observant as I was going to get or at least comfortable with, I thought that restricting my Shabbat to family time would be constructive for my husband and I as a unit. If I could take care of myself better, then I would be better to US, and vice-versa. We have always preferred to spend time with each other (and our four-legged family members) than on social engagements so upon my suggestion/recommendation my husband agreed to try it out.

Everyone close to us thought we were nuts and becoming religious fanatics. We aren't and we didn't. We work hard and appreciate Shabbat for what it is - serenity is spiritual, and that spiritual place is serene (whether it's a moment of lighting candles on Friday night, sitting on a surf board waiting for a wave, tasting a spoonful of flawless crème brulee, sharing the joy of a seven-letter word in Scrabble with the one you

love...).

I rejuvenate, relax and refresh my perspective so that I can approach life that follows Shabbat (the new week) with a clear-head, rested body and renewed sense of humor.

Now, I don't know how anyone functions for an extended period of time (at least at the pace the people I know keep) without the balance of one day off. Everyone needs Shabbat. And from a religious point of view, I see it as G-d's gift to humankind. I can't imagine life without it now.

### by Marina Muhlfriedel

I've tried it all - yoga, Hindu chanting, Christian and Zen meditation, retreats, you name it. I've explored the whole shebang. I've trekked across Thailand. I've climbed temples in Indonesia and Mexico. I've had a great time. I've met amazing people; experienced the inexplicable...but, I never found IT...THE ANSWER.

What is this crazy life on Earth? Nearly all of us sense that there's something else, something beyond, but what is IT? If IT is, doesn't IT have to be always and everywhere?

You can't open a newspaper or watch TV news without wars and religion writhing shamefully together into your consciousness. It makes me shy of them all. People take ancient scriptures and claiming devotion pick at them, interpret them until they suit their own agenda. I'm not interested in that. I am interested in knowing what IT is, for real. What is true divinity?

I remember being a little girl and watching my Grandma Eva in front of her silver candle sticks. She was tiny and the flames were just below eye level on the dining room table. She would have been rushing around for

hours, stirring soup, making kugel, baking challah, intense, determined. But, Grandma Eva knew what IT was. She knew IT in her unwavering identity as a Jew. Not for a second did she ever think that maybe IT was better understood on a mountaintop in Nepal than in an apartment over the candy store in Brooklyn.

When, all the cooking and cleaning was over; when the family had all gathered in the dining room and with a piece of lace covering her head she would strike a match that quieted the world. Immediately, I could see IT on her face. Everything else evaporated. I'd see the glow encompass my mother and father, my brother, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and even my Grandpa Harry. IT was there with us, simply and exquisitely and she my little Grandma Eva invited IT in. I could feel IT, not knowing if anyone else could.

My Grandma Eva has been gone for about twenty-five years now and you know I still haven't found a way to predict when IT is going to reveal itself enough that I can really study and embrace IT. But I do know this, I have lit candles on Friday night in more places than some people can name, and while I still don't know the answers to the big questions of this universe, I am grateful that I have been blessed with even a glimpse of IT on some kind of regular basis.

Become one of millions of Jewish women around the world who experience a weekly moment of inner peace through the timeless practice of lighting Shabbat candles. Join the FridayLight community by signing up to [www.FridayLight.org](http://www.FridayLight.org) for weekly candle-lighting reminders via text message or e-mail, add a personal journal or video entry, blog with other FridayLighters, and order your very own FREE FridayLight Shabbat Candle-lighting Kit.

## Customs

### Why do the bride and groom fast on their wedding day?

Since on the day of one's wedding G-d forgives the bride and groom of all their previous transgressions, it is seen as a private Yom Kippur for the couple. They fast until the ceremony, add Yom Kippur confessions to their afternoon prayers, recite the Book of Psalms, and ask for forgiveness for the wrongdoings of their youth, committed knowingly or unknowingly, before starting their new life together.

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# Moshia ch

Jewish teachings state that there will be ten famines that will come to the world at different points in history. There will be one additional hunger, though, during the times of Moshia ch. This final hunger will be different from all previous ones as it will be a hunger to hear the words of G-d. It will lead to the time when "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the water covers the ocean."  
*(Bereshit Rabba quoted in Discover Moshia ch)*

# It Happened Once

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's wrenching poverty was exceeded only by his great piety. He and his family often lacked even the barest necessities of life, but he refused assistance or charity from others. It was known that he himself subsisted on only a small basket of carob from week to week.

Rabbi Chanina's wife was herself a great and righteous woman. In spite of their desperate plight, she never complained. On the day before Shabbat, when all the other women busied themselves buying wine, meat, and other necessities, she lacked even the flour with which to make her challahs. Her neighbors were aware of her poverty, and their pitying glances caused her great distress.

One day she thought of an ingenious ploy to avoid this embarrassment. Every Friday morning, she prepared her oven exactly as if she were baking challahs. The fire was lit, and the smoke rose through the chimney. Who would be able to guess that the oven was, sadly, empty, since the family had nothing to cook for Shabbat?

Her secret was safe until one Friday, her neighbor, a nosy and mean-spirited person, decided to get to the bottom of this mystery. She knew that Rabbi Chanina was desperately poor, so what could be going on in his kitchen Friday afternoons? She made up her mind to investigate, and went next door to spy on her neighbor. The sound of knocking sent Rabbi Chanina's wife running to hide, so fearful was she of discovery.

The neighbor, not to be thwarted, entered the kitchen and looked in the oven. To her surprise, it was full of beautiful, golden challahs. She called to the rabbi's wife, "Run and get your oven-shovel. You challahs are about to burn!" And, in fact, the righteous woman was coming already, shovel in hand. You see, since miracles were so common in their household, she believed that G-d wouldn't allow her to suffer such embarrassment!

One day, Rabbi Chanina's wife could no longer bear to see the hardship of her poor children who lacked so many comforts. She approached Rabbi Chanina and said to him, "My husband, how much longer must we bear this terrible poverty?" The tzadik (righteous person) also felt his family's pain and replied, "What can we do to help ourselves?"

His wife answered, "Pray to the Master of the World, and beg Him to give us just a bit of our great reward which awaits us in the World-to-Come."

Rabbi Chanina, who was himself at a loss of how to deal

with his family's problem, began to pray. "G-d, we can no longer bear this terrible suffering. Please grant us in this world some of the great reward due us in the World-to-Come."

Suddenly, a hand descended through the roof of the house, and grasped in the hand was a golden table leg!

Rabbi Chanina, who was accustomed to miracles, happily received the golden leg. When he showed it to his wife, she was filled with joy. No longer would she have to bear the wailing of her cold, hungry children. G-d had answered their prayers; they would be able to live without hunger or want for the rest of their lives.

That night, the whole family retired to bed in a happy frame of mind. Everyone slept well that night. Only the wife of Rabbi Chanina slept fitfully, her rest disturbed by a distressing dream.

In her dream, the rebetzin saw the World-to-Come. And there, in great glory, sat hundreds of Sages and righteous people, all seated at magnificent golden tables. The awesome sight was marred by just one shocking detail. As she studied the scene carefully, she saw amidst all these people, one lone couple who stood out from the rest. This couple was seated at a table with only three golden legs!

Looking at this couple with pity, she suddenly realized that it was none other than she and her husband.

She awoke with a start, and related the terrible dream to her husband.

Rabbi Chanina was also quite upset by the dream. He faced his wife and asked her: "Do you wish to sit in the World-to-Come at a table with only three legs, while the other righteous people all have complete tables? Are you willing to lose a small amount of your eternal reward for more comfort in this world?"

Pale and trembling with distress, she answered, "Of course not! Please ask G-d to take back the golden leg."

Rabbi Chanina immediately rose and uttered a heartfelt prayer to G-d to remove the golden table leg. And no sooner had he completed his prayer, than the leg disappeared.

The great rabbis of the time, upon hearing of this occurrence commented, saying, that although the first miracle of the table leg descending from heaven was very great, the second miracle was far greater. For, as a rule, G-d gives more readily than He takes back.



## Candle Lighting Times Friday 28 November 2008

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:30pm	8:32pm
Brisbane	6:09pm	7:07pm
Surfers Par	6:08pm	7:06pm
Melbourne	8:06pm	9:10pm



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