



## Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah portion, Bo, contains the account of the tenth and final plague which G-d visited on the Egyptians, the only one in which the Jews were required to put a mark of identification upon their homes so that they would not also be afflicted when the firstborn sons were being slain. The Jews were commanded to put the blood from the Passover sacrifice on their doorposts, which is also symbolic of the blood of the covenant of circumcision, and they were warned by Moses to remain in their homes until the morning.

The Midrash offers an explanation why these precautions were necessary: "Once the Destroyer is given free reign, it cannot distinguish between the righteous and the wicked." This is why a special sign was needed to divert the Angel of Death. But wasn't the Angel of Death allowed free reign during the previous nine plagues? Why weren't measures taken then by the Jewish people to protect themselves?

The answer lies in the fact that the slaying of the firstborn was essentially different from the plagues which preceded it. The first nine plagues brought a limited and specific type of injury and devastation; the Angel of Death was not allowed to indiscriminately destroy in whatever manner it chose. During the tenth plague, however, the Egyptian firstborn died in a multitude of different ways.

Even more fundamental is the fact that the aim of the first nine plagues was to make the Egyptians acknowledge the existence and power of G-d. The final plague was sent solely to punish and to kill. At this point, the Attribute of Justice complained before G-d and pleaded that the Destroyer be allowed to harm the Jews as well: "How are the Jews so different from the Egyptians? Both nations have served idols, and both nations have sunk into the 49 gates of impurity!" G-d therefore decreed that the Jews identify themselves with a special sign, so that no harm would befall them.

But how could a drop of blood on a doorpost defend the Jews against such a grave accusation? Chasidic philosophy explains that the tenth plague was visited by G-d Himself, and was a demonstration of G-d's overwhelming love for the Jewish people, the love a father has for his children. This is a love irrespective of the son's negative behavior; it transcends even the legitimate claims of the Attribute of Justice.

The blood with which the Jews painted their doorposts was symbolic of the essential connection which exists between G-d and the Jew, a bond which transcends all rationale and human understanding. Just as the command to publicly defy Egyptian sensitivities by slaughtering a lamb, the Egyptian deity, seemed to be irrational, it was precisely this disregard for the natural order and the desire for self-sacrifice which brought about the redemption. It is only when Jews go beyond the boundaries of logic to show their devotion to G-d that He repays in kind.

Today, the Jewish people finds itself in a situation similar to the one faced by the Children of Israel as they were about to leave Egypt. The Final Redemption is right at our door, and all that is required is that we transcend the bonds of rational deliberation and declare ourselves ready. In this merit may we see the coming of Moshiach and the dawn of the Messianic Era.

*Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

## TRUE LEADERSHIP

"To the victor belongs the spoils." "The winner makes the rules." How often do we conceive of leaders as winners - on the battlefield, on the playing field, in the boardroom?

Certainly we value the ability to be decisive - although decisiveness doesn't necessarily make a leader, let alone a good one. Many people can decide quickly - and wrongly. So decisiveness must be tempered with discernment - the ability to decide correctly.

A leader can and should inspire his followers, motivate them, give them confidence, a sense of mission, determination and a belief in themselves - a surety of their rightness and their competence.

In order to inspire his followers, a leader must be firm and loyal. The leader must be loyal and dedicated not only to the cause, or the goal, but also to his followers.

Let us summarize the apparent traits of a leader: A leader is a winner, he's decisive, he motivates and inspires, he's confident and he's loyal.

Certainly, properly proportioned - an important stipulation - these traits characterize a leader. At least, it seems no one can be a leader without them. Yet too often the goal or the charisma justifies the leader, even when, despite the superficial accumulation of traits, he lacks the two essential ingredients, the sine qua non (without which, nothing), of leadership.

A true leader is first a role model, an example - a living example, to translate the Talmud's term. It goes without saying he is consistent, the same in private as in public. His unguarded conduct - when we see him relaxed, casual, off-the-record - is the same as when we see him in public. A leader's public persona is true to his private life - and vice versa. He is, in other words, whole. This wholeness, or whole-heartedness, in turn leads to a type of humility, an indifference to the externalities of leadership.

But a true leader must do more. He undertakes what he asks others to do. He is a model of self-sacrifice. Wealth, power, notoriety - these are not even side-effects. The true leader leads - he is in the forefront of the struggle. A leader unwilling to make the sacrifices he demands of others is no leader.

A true leader seeks the good of even those who oppose him. A true leader looks at a person's current situation and asks: What kindness can be done for this individual, regardless of his or her feelings toward the leader or views of the leader's ideals? What will arouse a person, not to become a "true believer," but to work for the good of others? How can the person be inspired to realize, to utilize his or her talents in a way that increases goodness and kindness in the world? How can the spiritual uniqueness be revealed? The leader involves himself not just for the goal, not just to "win," but for the sake of each individual.

The tenth of Shevat (Feb 4<sup>th</sup>) is a day when we celebrate leadership - the culmination of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe's life of leadership and the commencement of the Rebbe's leadership. True leadership.

When the Previous Rebbe asked young Jews to commit themselves, even at the risk of their lives, to open a school or other communal institution, they did so knowing he himself had made that same commitment and had risked his own life. And the Rebbe inspires thousands of emissaries to share his vision of making Judaism available, even as he made himself accessible to all.

May the tenth of Shevat also be a prelude to the ultimate true leadership with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

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## Yud Shvat

Wednesday, February 4, 2009 8:30 pm

36 flood Street Bondi NSW 2026



Special Guest Speaker  
Rabbi Motty Berger  
Melbourne, Australia

"Yud Shevat" -- the 10th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat -- is a most significant date on the Chassidic calendar. It is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (1880-1950). It is also the day when, in 1951, the seventh Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, formally accepted the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch with a historic maamar (discourse) of Basi L'Gani and address at a farbrengen (chassidic gathering) marking the first anniversary of his predecessor's passing.

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## Parsha in a Nutshell

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nissan.

G-d commands the first mitzvah to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a "Passover offering" to G-d: a lamb or kid is to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that G-d should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance and he literally drives the Children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart, there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments, draining Egypt of its wealth.

The Children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children. They are also commanded to wear tefillin on the arm and head as a reminder of the Exodus and their resultant commitment to G-d.

## Thoughts that Count

For I have hardened his heart (Ex. 10:1)

G-d "boasts" of the free will He has given man, one of the greatest mysteries of all creation, and a part of the Divine plan. Only man can take the life-force and blessings he receives from Above and use them in a manner totally contrary to G-d's will. *(Sefat Emet)*

We know not with what we must serve G-d, until we reach there (Ex. 10:26)

While we yet live in this world, we cannot accurately assess the value of our Torah learning and our performance of commandments, or even know if they were done only for the sake of heaven. It is only after we have reached the World to Come, the World of Truth, that we will know how faithfully we fulfilled our tasks. *(Chidushai Harim)*

This month shall be unto you (Ex. 12:2)

According to Rabbi Yitzchak the Torah should have begun with this verse, and not "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth." What is so special about this mitzvah (commandment), and why doesn't the Torah begin with the words "I am the L-rd thy G-d," a seemingly more fundamental principle of Judaism? The existence of G-d is the basis upon which the observance of Torah and mitzvot is predicated, but the objective of the entire Torah is best expressed in the mitzvah of "this month (chodesh) shall be unto you." The purpose of the Jew is to become an active partner in creation (the Hebrew word "chodesh" comes from the word chadash - "new"), transforming the **from** G-dliness, into yet another expression of holiness. *(Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



On this coming Wednesday, Yud (the tenth of) Shevat, we will commemorate the passing of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1950. On Yud Shevat in 1951, the present Rebbe officially accepted the position of leadership and delivered his first Chasidic discourse, "Basi Legani."

This discourse was truly ground-breaking, laying the foundation of the Rebbe's work over the next few decades. In no uncertain terms it described the uniqueness of our generation and the special role we play in history.

The core revelation the Rebbe introduced is that ours is "the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption." During the past seven generations of Jewish history, beginning with the inception of Chabad Chasidism, Divine consciousness has been progressively refined.

Ours, the seventh generation, is poised on the threshold of the Redemption.

"This is not through our own choice or a result of our service; in fact, it might often not even be to our liking. Nevertheless...we stand on the 'heel of Moshiach' - the very edge of the heel - ready to complete the task of drawing down the Divine Presence...into the lowest realm possible."

This knowledge implies a responsibility that is incumbent upon each and every one of us. As the Previous Rebbe wrote in a letter, every Jew must ask himself, "What have I done and what am I doing to alleviate the birth-pangs of Moshiach, and to merit the total Redemption which will come through our Righteous Moshiach?" Every mitzvah we do, every good deed or increase in Torah study has the potential to tip the scales, to bring the ongoing historical process toward the Messianic era to its ultimate conclusion.

As "Basi Legani" concludes, "Let us all merit to see and be together with the Rebbe, in a physical body and within our reach, and he will redeem us."

*Pinchus Feldman*  
Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

**Smile its Friday** Schmulik from Chelm visited another town. A local man asked him: "How many cookies can you eat on an empty stomach?" Schmulik replied, "Oh, about five..." The local guy replied, "No, you're wrong! You can only eat one. After that your stomach's not empty anymore!!" Schmulik returned to Chelm and asked Moysheh, "How many cookies can you eat on an empty stomach?" Moysheh answered, "Two." Schmulik told him, "Too bad. If you had said, 'five', I would have had a great joke for you!"

## A Blessing From The Rebbe

by Rabbi Leibl Groner

(Rabbi Leibl Groner is a member of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's secretariat)

A woman told me a story six months ago when I was in Melbourne for the shloshim (thirty days after the passing) of my brother:

The story is as follows:

In 1988 the Rebbe began a custom of "Sunday dollars." Each week, thousands of people would line up to receive a dollar and a blessing from the Rebbe. The recipients were to give the dollar or its equivalent to charity.

On one of those Sundays, a married couple came to the Rebbe to ask for a blessing. The woman was expecting their first child. As she passed by the Rebbe she asked for a blessing for an easy pregnancy and an easy birth. The Rebbe gave the woman a dollar. He then gave another dollar to her and a dollar to the husband, saying, "L'orech yamim v'shanim tovov (for length of days and good years)."

The woman eventually gave birth to healthy baby boy. For the first years of his life everything was fine. When he was twelve years old, however, he started complaining about headaches. The family doctor sent them to a neurologist who, after various tests, told them that there was a growth on the boy's brain. The growth, the doctor insisted, was very aggressive and he had only a short time to live.

Upon hearing this dire verdict, the husband told the wife, "Do you remember when we went to the Rebbe when you were pregnant and what the Rebbe said? Surely the Rebbe meant his blessing for long life and good years for our boy. We have to do everything that we can and we must rely on the Rebbe for everything else."

The couple insisted that the doctors aggressively treat the growth and do whatever was medically possible to help their son. Today, he is a healthy young man, married and now starting a family of his own.

I was in France a little while ago and a woman there told me that her eight-year-old daughter was suffering from an extremely severe skin rash. She had gone to a team of dermatologists and they had recommended giving her very high doses of cortisone in the hopes that it would give the little girl some relief. The mother was reluctant to follow this advice, due to various side-effects that can be caused by high dosages of cortisone.

The mother wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking for the Rebbe's advice and blessings and then placed the letter in the Igrat Kodesh (volumes of correspondence of the Rebbe). She then opened up the book to the page where she had randomly inserted the letter. In the letter on that page the Rebbe wrote "... a member of your family is suffering from a skin disease and the doctors want to give a medication that is very strong; in my opinion the diagnosis is a mistake and I do not think that the person should take the medicine. In fact, if the person will take the medicine it can be very detrimental."

With this answer from the Rebbe, the mother went back to the dermatologists and told the doctor that she was not willing to give the cortisone to her daughter. "In that case," the doctor told her, "we will have to send you to a different dermatologist. He is one of the top specialists in all of Paris."

The mother and daughter went to the specialist who examined the child and reviewed the medical reports. "The diagnosis is a mistake," the doctor told the mother. "I hope you did not give the cortisone to your daughter as the previous doctors recommended because if she were to take this medicine it could be very detrimental."

A woman whom my wife knows was moving from one apartment to another. She came to my wife asking her if she could help her write a letter to the Rebbe requesting a blessing for the move. As she didn't know Yiddish or Hebrew, she was asking my wife to write the letter for her. "Write the letter in English," my wife encouraged her. "The Rebbe understands English." The woman wrote the letter herself and then inserted it in a volume of Igrat Kodesh that she had removed from our bookshelf. My wife opened the book to the page where the letter had been randomly placed and translated the letter that was on the page. It was a letter to a couple who were moving into a new apartment, blessing them that everything about the move should be met with success. The woman was pleased with the blessing, but then my wife noticed that the book she had taken out of the bookshelf was a collection of letters of the Previous Rebbe, the father-in-law of the Rebbe.

"Of course, the Previous Rebbe was a tzadik and a Rebbe, but I would feel more comfortable having a blessing from our Rebbe, as well," the woman said to my wife. My wife pointed out to the woman the volumes of the Rebbe's Igrat Kodesh that were on the second shelf. The woman selected a volume from the second shelf and placed her letter randomly in this second volume. She handed the book to my wife and asked my wife to translate the letter that appeared on that page. My wife read, "I'm surprised that you are turning to me about a subject that my father-in-law has already dealt with..."

Recently, a father and son came to our home. The father told me, "Do you remember that you asked me for a bill? Well, this is the payment."

But let me backtrack. After the Rebbe had a stroke in 1992, the physicians who were attended to the Rebbe in the Rebbe's room at Lubavitch World Headquarters regularly needed to order blood analysis. Most of the labs were only able to provide results in 2-3 days. The doctors wanted the results as quickly as possible. We located a lab in Brooklyn owned by two brothers who assured us that for the Rebbe they could provide us with results within 4-5 hours.

A month after we started using this lab, I called the owners to ask them for a bill for the work that they had done so far and requested that they bill us on a regular basis. (The Rebbe would never accept anything gratis.) They never sent any bills. Many, many months later, a week after Gimmel Tammuz, one of the owners called my office. He told me, "You asked us for a bill for the lab work we did on behalf of the Rebbe. My wife and I have been married for nine years and we have no children. I would like the payment of the bill to be a blessing from the Rebbe that we have a child."

I asked him for his full Hebrew name and his wife's full Hebrew name. That day I went to the Ohel (the Rebbe's resting place) and told the Rebbe everything, and that they wanted the payment of the bill to be that they have a child. Eighteen months later the lab owner called me and told me the good news that his wife had had a baby boy. And recently, the boy, now 12 years old, came to visit me with his father. "Do you remember that you asked for a bill?" the father said. "This is the payment."

Published by

**The Yeshiva Center**

**Chabad NSW Headquarters**

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# Moshiach

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that the numerical value of Moshiach, 358, equals the word for emissary, 348, with an additional yud, 10. Yud, the smallest Hebrew letter, characterizes selflessness and total dedication to fulfilling G-d's will, the prerequisite of true leadership. Yud also alludes to the highest level of soul, the yechida, whose initial letter yud symbolizes the point of Moshiach within every Jew waiting to be directed toward the fulfillment of G-d's ultimate plan. Thus, by cultivating and realizing leadership potential within our own limited reality, we help create the proper spiritual climate for G-d to reveal Himself fully.

# It Happened Once

The tenth of Shevat is the anniversary of the passing of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn.

The Previous Rebbe led the Chabad-Lubavitch movement for thirty years. The first ten years were in anti-Semitic Communist Russia where the Previous Rebbe inspired the establishment of hundreds, even thousands of clandestine "underground" Torah schools, mikvas and the training of mohels and rabbis to keep Judaism alive. He defied Stalin's all-pervasive, deadly "purge Network" until he was finally imprisoned, sentenced to death and then miraculously released but forced to leave the country. The next ten years were in anti-Semitic Poland until the Nazis attacked and the Previous Rebbe was forced to flee to the United States.

The Previous Rebbe arrived in the United States in a wheelchair, broken in body, but whole in spirit. He immediately devoted the last ten years of his life and all his energies to saving world Judaism, beginning and developing the concept of Jewish outreach.

The Previous Rebbe vowed to "melt the ice of America." He printed books and pamphlets, encouraged programs on radio and even sent out emissaries; all with the goal of waking up Jews and preparing the world for Moshiach.

This story takes place in the first ten year period of the Previous Rebbe's leadership.

At this time (1924) the headquarters of Chabad-Lubavitch was in the city of Rostov far from the center of Russia. From there the Previous Rebbe controlled his "forbidden" educational network which, besides the physical dangers hanging over the heads of the teachers and pupils, was always in deep financial problems.

Hundreds of teachers and workers had to be paid, pupils had to be fed and donations, especially for "counter-revolutionary" Jewish causes, were very scarce.

One Chasid of the Previous Rebbe who was manager of one of these yeshivas got acquainted with a very wealthy Jew in Rostov and asked for financial assistance. "The yeshiva is folding! The teachers and staff have not been paid for months and there is no food for the pupils!" He pleaded. But despite his requests, arguments and tears the rich man would not budge; he was a true miser.

Until one day the rich Jew happened to mention his own problem: he had no children! This broke his heart and worried him day and night. Suddenly he looked the Chasid in the eyes, became serious and made a proposition. "If you, being a Chasid and a man of G-d, would bless me

with a child I will give what you ask."

The Chasid, realizing that this was a golden opportunity, shifted into another gear and the words came tumbling out.

"My school is going to close any day, certainly we can't wait nine months! If you give the money that the yeshiva needs (here he quoted a very large sum) now, then I promise that within a year you will be hugging your son!"

The rich man burst into tears of grateful joy as he shook the Chasid's hand, went to his safe, took out the entire sum and gave it to the Chasid. The Chasid felt a tweak of guilt about the blessing, but hundreds of young Jewish souls would be saved! Think of all the Torah that would be studied! All the commandments that would be observed! Surely in the merit of all this, the blessing for a child would be granted!

But it wasn't. The months passed and nothing. Finally after a year, the donor went to the home of the Chasid.

"Do you remember me? Do you remember your promise? Your blessing? Where is my child?"

The Chasid didn't lose his composure, forced a smile and answered, "Give it a few more weeks."

The rich man quieted down and as soon as he left, the Chasid ran to the house of the Rebbe and arranged a private meeting. "Who told you to promise children?" said the Rebbe. "How could you do such a thing? The fact is that I can't help."

"But Rebbe," the Chasid pleaded "I did it for the children, for the pupils - without his money the yeshiva would have closed!" But his pleas were to no avail.

Two weeks later the man was back. And he was demanding his donation back if the Chasid did not make good on his blessing for a child. The Chasid had no choice but to return to the Rebbe.

"Please Rebbe" he begged after somehow managing to secure another private audience. "Save me!"

This time the Rebbe answered differently, "All right! But this is the only time! Go and tell him in my name that this year he will have a son. But from now on, never make promises that you cannot fulfill!" sure enof a son was born and he never made such promises again.

Sure enough that year his son was born, he continued to support the Rebbe's programs and the Chasid never made any more such promises



## Candle Lighting Times Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:45pm	8:43pm
Brisbane	6:26pm	7:21pm
Surfers Par	6:25pm	7:20pm
Melbourne	8:18pm	9:19pm

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