

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Beshalach

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This Shabbos, the tenth day of Shevat, marks the Yahrzeit of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson and the subsequent leadership of the Rebbe. The following article exemplifies the unique style of a true and dedicated leader of Klal Yisroel.

It's an open secret that nobody in government wants to talk about: That cherished presidential signature that's tucked away in a scrapbook or framed for all to see might never have passed under the president's hand.

For decades, presidents of both parties have let an autopen do some of the heavy lifting when it comes to scrawling their signatures...

"You want to preserve the president's semblance of reaching out and being connected," says Jack Shock, director of presidential letters and messages for former President Bill Clinton...

Here's why this story intrigued me.

You see, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, received a fair amount of letters as well. While exact numbers are hard to come by, according to Ms. Susan Handelman, a professor at Bar Ilan University, "The Rebbe would receive and personally read and answer around four hundred letters a day. And probably equally as many telephone calls, with questions for him and requests for blessings, would come in each day from around the world."

Purportedly, research done by the New York Postal Service in the '80s found that the Rebbe received second to the most (non-commercial) mail in all of New York State!

And yet, the Rebbe made the time to answer each person personally.

So what's the big deal, you're thinking?

A kind rabbi who enjoyed answering mail...

Nice, but not mind-blowing.

Except that this rabbi also



happened to be running one of the largest Jewish organizations in the world. And in his "free time" he managed to become one of the most prolific Jewish thinkers and writers of our century. Not only that, for decades, he spent three nights a week in conversation with people from all walks of life seeking his counsel. And at least once a week he learned Torah through the night, and on any given week he addressed his disciples for six to eight hours.

Sounds impossible, doesn't it? Like, when did he sleep?

The Rebbe's nocturnal schedule can be best summed up from a comment made by the sixth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, to a leading Chabad disciple, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky: "My son-in-law is never sleeping at 4:00 in the morning. He either hasn't yet gone to sleep, or he's already woken up."

And here's where the Presidential autopen comes in.

In the introduction to "The Letter and the Spirit," a collection of letters of the Rebbe, Dr. Nissan Mindel, who served as one of the Rebbe's secretaries, describes the process of the Rebbe's written correspondence.

In passing he mentions the following anecdote.

I (once) was so bold as to suggest that, in the case of certain outgoing mail there might be a way to save the Rebbe some time. I referred, by way of example, to so-called standard letters such as Rosh Hashanah [High Holiday] greetings, responses to requests for the Rebbe's blessing on happy family events, such as Bar Mitzvah, marriage, birthdays, and others, all of which together, though not part of my job, could number several thousand in the course of a year.

Now, if the Rebbe would permit to have such letters "signed" by a rubber stamp, a universally accepted practice, it would certainly save the Rebbe considerable precious time.

With due acknowledgment of his secretary's thoughtfulness, the Rebbe politely rejected the idea out of hand, adding an explanation which, presumably, should have occurred to me in the first place. I should have known that anything that smacked of "subterfuge" would be repugnant to the Rebbe. That goes without saying. The explanation the Rebbe gave me was simple: "How can I send prayerful wishes to a person in such an artificial manner, and how would anyone feel receiving from his Rebbe good wishes in a letter that is signed with a rubber stamp?" So that was the end of that.

Moving to note is that even after, at the age of 90, the Rebbe suffered a serious stroke, which left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak, he communicated his desire to be shown the letters of greetings and congratulations that were sent his followers before they were signed by a secretary on his behalf.

What motivated the Rebbe in such poor health to burden himself so, we cannot know for certain. However, the Rebbe's argument upon rejecting the use of an artificial signature leaves us with a pretty good idea.

Continued on page 2

Fully Engaged

This story is not an isolated snapshot of a great leader. I would venture to say that it captures the essence of the Rebbe's charisma and his successful effort to change the landscape of world Jewry. This story about the Rebbe's signature, then, is signature Rebbe.

The Rebbe believed to his core in the value of the individual. He never lost sight of each tree in the forest and would often quote the Talmudic teaching, "He who saves an individual is as if he saved an entire world." Indeed, as his behavior consistently demonstrated, to the Rebbe, the Talmud's "as if" was a figure of speech; in his eyes every individual was an entire world.

It's no wonder that the sentiment most commonly articulated by those who visited the Rebbe was: "When standing before him, one felt like they were the only person in the world."

To quote Diane Abrams, wife of former New York State Attorney General Bob Abrams, "The Rebbe was always focused on the other person, his sensitivity to others heightened to an incredible degree. This was one of his great powers, his great strength. When standing before him, you felt that you were the only person in the world. He never made you feel that he was greater than you; he brought out the best in you."

The myriad of important matters on his mind notwithstanding, when the Rebbe met with people he was completely there and fully present.

One expression of the Rebbe's present-ness was articulated by the dean of a yeshiva of higher education who made an interesting observation about the Rebbe's desk.

Whenever he visited the Rebbe for a private audience, the Rebbe's desk was absolutely clear of clutter, save for a Book of Psalms. What impressed him most about this was not the Rebbe's orderliness, but the message he was communicating to his visitors

through this effort: "Nothing in the world matters more than you at this moment."

The clear table suggested that the Rebbe had nothing on his agenda but the people he was seeing. He was never "in the middle of something," even though he most certainly was.

Between the Lines

Not only did the Rebbe want nothing to get in the way of his connectivity to the people he saw and wrote to, but he also wanted nothing to cloud his writers' connectivity to him.

To this end, and at the seemingly unwarranted expense of his time, the Rebbe would open every single letter addressed to him by hand.

When asked by his well-intentioned secretaries if he might agree to use an electronic letter-opener they bought in order to save him the time spent opening every letter himself, he said: "Can an electronic machine possibly detect the pain and tears that went into the writing and signing of these heartfelt letters?"

On another occasion the Rebbe told a disciple who wrote a letter on behalf of a friend (paraphrased), "Better that your friend writes to me himself next time. When I read a letter I try to read in between the lines as well."

The Rebbe took the art of listening to a new level, focusing not only on what was said, but also on what was left unsaid; he didn't just process requests for help, he deliberately shared in the accompanying pain of those in need.

Sweating the Small Stuff

In distinction to the philosophy of many heads of state and creators of movements, the Rebbe believed that while building a movement or advancing the overall good of the state was important, it was not more important than the people it was created for. In a pre-Passover pastoral letter written by the Rebbe in 1964, he

elaborates on this theme:

This message is of particular importance to leaders of groups and movements, and especially to those who occupy the position of spiritual leaders of their communities. All too often they are involved in "world problems," in "tremendous issues," while only occasionally, or even quite rarely, do we find a leader who stoops to engage in "small, ordinary" problems besetting the daily life, problems which directly concern his congregants.

The more prominent the leader, the more acutely is he "compelled" to address himself to all humanity. If he is particularly imaginative, he sees himself called upon to speak also to posterity. Should he be blessed with oratorical powers, he considers it his duty to arouse the "world conscience" with all the powers of his eloquence, which make headlines, so that he comes to be regarded as a leader of leaders and the voice of spokesmen, who envy his "public image" and seek to emulate him and even outdo him.

Responding to the leader, the follower is often carried away, and he joins the leader in offering wise counsel to various governments on matters of policy, and to all mankind on matters of good conduct, so as to ensure the happiness of all future generations. After engaging in such lofty resolutions, it would hardly be "fitting" to sound the alarm on ordinary problems in daily life.

The Rebbe didn't just preach these words; he lived and embodied them. I believe that it was this attitude, the Rebbe's trademark personal approach to every person he interacted with, and, by extension and example, the individualistic approach of his emissaries worldwide—"responding to the leader, the follower is often carried away"—that best explains Chabad's remarkable, continued, and even disproportionate, influence on the Jewish people and the world at large.

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ISSUE 1121

MOSHIACH MATTERS

"Trees are destined to yield fruits every day." (Shabbat 30b) In the Messianic Era, produce will sprout, grow and bear fruit immediately. Now it takes time to bring something from potential to actual. This is because there is a disconnect between the spiritual source and the physical world. Moshiach will reveal the essence that permeates everything equally and unites the spiritual with the physical. Once everything is thus aligned there will be no delay or resistance between the potential and the actual. The more Torah permeates our being, the more our actions will impact the world.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Shevat, 5723 [February 10, 1963]
Brooklyn, N.Y.
New England Convention of N'shei u'Bnois Chabad
Boston, Mass.

Blessing and Greeting:

I trust that all of you - delegates and members of the various branches convening today - come imbued with a goodly measure of inspiration drawn from the two very recent auspicious days of this month, the Yahrzeit-Hilulo of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of saintly memory - on the 10th, and of the New Year for Trees - yesterday.

Among the topics discussed at the Farbrengens on both these occasions, occurring within one week, was the affinity between these two notable days, and how their instructive messages are related.

The Torah likens a human being to a tree, and the Tzaddik to a flourishing G-date palm. In a remarkable statement in the Talmud our Sages declare, moreover, that a Tzaddik lives on forever, "for just as his seed is alive, so is he alive." It is noteworthy that the word "seed" is used here, rather than "descendants" or "children," or "disciples," though all these are included in the word "seed." In choosing the word "seed" in this connection, our Sages conveyed to us the specific images and ideas which this word brings to our minds:

The wonderful process of growth, which transforms a tiny seed into a multiple reproduction of the same, be it an earful of grains or, in the case of a fruit seed, a fruit-bearing tree; the care which the growth process requires, and how a little extra care at an early stage is multiplied in the final product; the fact that the more advanced and more highly developed the fruit, the longer it takes to grow and ripen, so that grain, for example, takes but a few months to reproduce itself, while it takes a fruit-bearing many years to mature, etc.

All these principles apply in a very practical way in the performance of our daily service to G-d, which, of course, embraces our whole daily life, since it is our duty to serve G-d in all our ways.

The New England Convention of the N'shei u'Bnois Chabad will surely give full expression to the spirit of the Yahrzeit-Hilulo of the Rebbe and to the feeling that it is a branch of his planting. I hope and pray that each and every one of you will endeavor to emulate his dedicated work, and to live up to the high esteem and great expectations which he so often and so earnestly expressed in regard to the Jewish woman in general, and the Chabad woman in particular.

Wishing you the utmost success,

CUSTOMS CORNER

In this week's Parsha When the Israelites wandered in the desert following the Exodus and until they entered the Promised Land, G-d provided them daily with heavenly manna. In order to enable the Jews to observe Shabbat (and not have to carry and prepare the manna on the Day of Rest), G-d provided them with a double portion on Friday. To commemorate this miracle, the Sages instituted that we break bread over two complete loaves at the start of every Shabbat and Holiday meal. These two loaves are known as *Lechem Mishneh*.

The two loaves must be complete and unsliced and be at least the size of an olive, and made of grain flour (wheat, barley, spelt, rye or oat) so that the blessing recited is *Hamotzie* (the blessing on bread).

The loaves should be covered during *kiddush*. This is reminiscent of the manna, which was covered, for protection, by a layer of dew.

It is customary to slice large pieces of challah for each of the assembled, to show that the Shabbat meal is very precious to us.

It is customary - both on Shabbat and during the week - to dip bread in salt after reciting the *Hamotzie* blessing. This reminds us that the table we eat on is like the holy Altar on which the priests used to salt all sacrifices.

A WORD

from the Director

This Yud Shvat marks sixty-three years of the Rebbe's leadership.

On the day of the Rebbe's official acceptance of the leadership, the Rebbe, in a straightforward manner, set the rules as to how his leadership would proceed.

The Rebbe placed upon every person the responsibility for bringing Moshiach.

"Action is the essential thing" has been the Rebbe's motto from the beginning. The Rebbe dealt with the effect of the Previous Rebbe's passing in his unique way: "A certain Chasid wrote me that since the histalkus [passing] he is very broken hearted, and sometimes, when he is alone, he breaks into tears."

"The question remains, however: What did he accomplish by his weeping? Is this the Rebbe's intention - that he wants him to cry?!"

It is almost certain that his tears accomplish nothing... In the meantime, however, the work of fulfilling the mission given by the Rebbe is not being done!!!"

"By his lack of action the abovementioned individual is (G-d forbid) delaying the Redemption - and because of this the Jewish people are being detained in exile one moment longer!"

The Rebbe conveyed to us as well, in the above-mentioned talk, that nothing had changed regarding the instructions and orders of the Previous Rebbe, "The mission with which we are entrusted must be carried out without taking anything else into consideration... One should conduct himself like a truly humble person, who is strong in his convictions and allows nothing to distract him."

May we speedily merit the Geulah Hashlemah!

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Many years ago in the Land of Israel, there lived a man named Reb Nisim. He and his family lived in a small stone house, very much like all the other houses in his village, with one exception. Next to his house there grew the most beautiful tree, which produced a crop of luscious pomegranates. People travelled from far and wide to purchase these special "Nisim" fruit. In fact, they were so much in demand that the family was able to live all year on the profits they made from selling these pomegranates.

Every summer the tree was heavy with the beautiful, red fruits. But one summer not even one pomegranate could be seen. Reb Nisim called his eldest son and told him, "Climb up to the top of the tree; perhaps there are some fruits there that we don't see." The boy climbed to the top, and indeed, hidden from view were three precious fruits - the most beautiful they had ever seen.

When Shabbat came, Reb Nisim put two of the pomegranates on the table for a special Shabbat treat. The third, he put away to eat on the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the Trees.

That was a difficult year for the family, as they had always depended on the tree for their livelihood. Finally Reb Nisim's wife suggested that he travel outside the Holy Land to earn or raise some money. He was very reluctant to leave. He had lived his entire life surrounded by the holiness of the Land of Israel, and he didn't want to "shame" the land by admitting that he could not make a livelihood there. He tried in various ways to earn some money, but every effort met with failure, and it seemed that he had no choice but to do as his wife had suggested. "All right," he said. "I will go, but I will never reveal to any soul that I come from the Holy Land."

For many months he travelled from city to city, but each place had its own poor to support, and he had no luck. Since it is a great mitzvah (commandment) to support the poor of the Land of Israel, he would have received alms had he identified himself, but this he refused to do.

It was Tu B'Shevat when Reb Nisim arrived in the city of Koshta, Turkey. When he came to the local synagogue, a shocking sight met his eyes. All the Jews of the city were gathered there, weeping, mourning and reciting Psalms. "What has happened?" asked Reb Nisim, in alarm.

The sexton of the synagogue explained, "The son of the Sultan is very ill. He knows that Jews are accomplished doctors, and he has decreed that every Jew will be expelled from his realm unless we produce a doctor or a cure for his son. So far, we have failed." As Reb Nisim was absorbing this terrible news, the rabbi's assistant asked Reb Nisim to accompany him to the rabbi, saying, "Our rabbi says he is very happy to have a guest from the Holy Land."

Reb Nisim went as requested, but he was puzzled. How did the rabbi know? He had been so careful to tell no one where he was from. He decided to ask the rabbi directly.

"There is a special fragrance about you. I feel it is the holiness of the land which adheres to you," the rabbi replied.

"What you are smelling must be the fragrance of the pomegranate I have brought with me," Reb Nisim explained. "I carried it with me especially for Tu B'Shevat, and since that is today, I beg you to partake of it with me."

The rabbi was overjoyed. "Please, tell me your name," he asked.

"My name is Reb Nisim." When the rabbi heard that he smiled broadly.

"This surely is a sign of Divine Providence. In honour of Tu B'Shevat, I have been studying about the different types of fruits that are described in the holy books." The rabbi described what he had learned. Then he said, "The acronym of the word 'rimonim' (pomegranates) is 'refua melech u'bno nisim yaviya meheira' - the recovery for the king and his son, Nisim will bring quickly. Let us bring some of your pomegranate juice to the king's son at once. Perhaps, in the merit of the fruits of the Holy Land, G-d will bring us success."

The two men were admitted to the room of sick prince, who was lying close to death. They approached the bed and administered a few drops of juice into the unconscious boy's mouth. Suddenly colour rose into his pallid complexion. They gave him a few more drops, and there was a weak but unmistakable flicker of the prince's eyelids.

The Sultan grasped the hand of his beloved child, and tears of joy welled in his eyes. He turned to the two Jews and said, "I will never forget what you have done for my son."

The next day Reb Nisim and the rabbi were summoned to the palace. The prince was sitting up in bed, a happy smile on his tired face. The Sultan's servants brought in large velvet bags bulging with gold coins and jewels. "Reb Nisim, this is just a small token of my gratitude to you for having saved my son. As for the Jews in my realm, they may stay and live in peace."

Reb Nisim returned home laden with riches. The next summer, the wondrous pomegranate tree produced as many beautiful fruits as ever. Its fame spread as the story of the prince was retold throughout the Holy Land.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

G-d will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:14)

G-d will only fight your battle on the condition that you "hold your peace" - remain quiet and avoid controversy and disagreement amongst yourselves. (Shaar Bat-Rabim)

This is my G-d and I will glorify him (Ex. 15:2)

The Commentator Rashi explains this to mean, "I will declare His beauty and His praise." This verse teaches us that we must always strive to perform mitzvot (commandments) in the most beautiful and sincere manner possible. A mitzvah's beauty lies in the purity of our intent. We should be motivated to carry out G-d's will for its own sake and not for personal reasons or self-glorification. (Ohr HaTorah)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 10 JANUARY 2014

BEGINS	ENDS
8:27MELBOURNE	9:32
8:15ADELAIDE	9:17
6:30BRISBANE	7:27
7:00DARWIN	7:53
6:30GOLD COAST	7:27
7:09PERTH	8:08
7:52SYDNEY	8:53
8:04CANBERRA	9:06
8:30LAUNCESTON	9:37
8:26AUCKLAND	9:29
8:39WELLINGTON	9:46
8:34HOBART	9:43
7:30BYRON BAY	8:28
6:55SINGAPORE	7:47



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS BESHALACH
9 SHEVAT • 10 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:27 PM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:10 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:49 AM
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:32 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	8:35 PM
	MAARIV: SUN-FRI:	9:25 PM