

LAMPLIGHTER

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Parshas Vayishlach
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The 19th of the month of Kislev, which occurs this coming week on Monday, is the date on which Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chassidus, was liberated from prison.

Known among Chasidim as the Festival of Liberation, it always occurs in close proximity to the week when the Torah portion of Vayishlach is read. As "nothing happens by chance," we must conclude that the Festival of Liberation is alluded to in Vayishlach.

The main idea of the 19th of Kislev is spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus outward. The "wellsprings," the innermost part of Torah, must not remain at their source, but must flow "outward" and inundate even the lowest parts of the earth. Furthermore, not only must the waters of Chasidut be carried everywhere, but the wellsprings themselves must be conveyed to every single Jew, no matter where he/she is.

The 19th of Kislev teaches us the necessity of bringing the life-giving waters of Torah, and particularly the inner-part of Torah as expounded in Chassidus, to every Jew. The name of this week's portion, "Vayishlach," means "And he sent."

A shaliach, an emissary (from the same root as vayishlach), is a person who is dispatched in the sender's stead; moreover, "a person's emissary is just like him." In other words, when an emissary is sent to a certain place to carry out his mission, it is the same as if the sender himself has made the journey.

This concept of "spreading the wellsprings outward" is expressed in the word "vayishlach," the name of our portion. The wellsprings must not stay at their source, but must be sent ever outward to reach as many people as possible. The concept of Vayishlach exists in every age and in every generation.

G-d "sends" the soul down from the celestial spheres to be en clothed within a corporeal body, to enable the person to serve G-d within the context of the physical world. This shlichut (mission) began with Adam and Chava (Eve), and is continued by their descendants.

The phenomenon of sending emissaries has existed throughout the generations. We find that many Torah giants sent shlichim to carry out various holy missions.

The concept of shlichut was further emphasized by the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidus and his spiritual "descendants," especially Rabbi Shneur Zalman and his successors; they, in turn, entrusted every Jew with the holy mission of "spreading the wellsprings outward."

In fact, the Previous Rebbe declared that shlichut is the unique mitzva (commandment) of our generation. Every Jew must be a shaliach to spread the wellsprings of Torah and Judaism wherever he or she goes.

Yud Tes Kislev

The 19th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, Monday, is celebrated as the "Rosh Hashanah of Chassidism." It was on this date, in the year 1798, that the founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), was freed from his imprisonment in czarist Russia.

More than a personal liberation, this was a watershed event in the history of Chassidism, heralding a new era in the revelation of the "inner soul" of Torah.

The public dissemination of the teachings of Chassidism had in fact begun two generations earlier. The founder of the chassidic movement, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), revealed to his disciples gleanings from the mystical soul of Torah which had previously been the sole province of select Kabbalists in each generation. This work was continued by the Baal Shem Tov's disciple, Rabbi Dov Ber, the "Maggid of Mezeritch"—who is also deeply connected with the date of "19 Kislev": on this day in 1772, 26 years before Rabbi Schneur Zalman's release from prison, the Maggid returned his soul to his Maker. Before his passing, he said to his disciple, Rabbi Schneur Zalman: "This day is our yom tov (festival)."

Rabbi Schneur Zalman went much farther than his predecessors, bringing these teachings to broader segments of the Jewish population of Eastern Europe. More significantly, Rabbi Schneur Zalman founded the "Chabad" approach—a philosophy and system of study, meditation, and character refinement that made these abstract concepts rationally comprehensible and practically applicable in daily life.

In its formative years, the chassidic movement was the object of strong, and often venomous, opposition from establishment rabbis and laymen. Even within the chassidic community, a number of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's contemporaries and colleagues felt that he had "gone too far" in tangibilizing and popularizing the hitherto hidden soul of Torah.

In the fall of 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was arrested on charges that his teachings and activities threatened the imperial authority of the czar, and was imprisoned in an island fortress in the Neva River in Petersburg. In his interrogations, he was compelled to present to the czar's ministers the basic tenets of Judaism and explain various points of chassidic philosophy and practice. After 53 days, he was exonerated of all charges and released.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman saw these events as a reflection of what was transpiring Above. He regarded his arrest as but the earthly echo of a heavenly indictment against his revelation of the most intimate secrets of the Torah. And he saw his release as signifying his vindication in the heavenly court. Following his liberation on 19 Kislev, he redoubled his efforts, disseminating his teachings on a far broader scale, and with more detailed and "down-to-earth" explanations, than before.

The nineteenth of Kislev therefore marks the "birth" of Chassidism: the point at which it was allowed to emerge from the womb of "mysticism" into the light of day, to grow and develop as an integral part of Torah and Jewish life.



Slice of LIFE

Yud Tes Kislev, in addition to being the anniversary of the liberation of the Alter Rebbe from prison, is also the day upon which his predecessor the Maggid of Mezeritch passed away. Presented here is the story of his passing.

The meeting in Rovno was stormy and eventful. The disciples of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, the successor to the Baal Shem Tov, were greatly agitated. They felt strongly that the mitnagdim, those Jews opposed to the chassidic movement, had overreached all bounds of legitimacy.

The Maggid himself kept silent. Though filled with empathy for his followers, he thought that it was nevertheless better not to answer or react to the events. "Truth stands, falsehood does not stand"; thus, surely time itself would contribute to the vindication of the truth and authenticity of Chassidism. He counseled patience and forbearance. Already in the days of the Baal Shem Tov, he had joined with his master in a declaration "to forgive fully and absolutely, as Scripture (Psalms 104:35) states, 'Let sins be annihilated,' not the sinners."

He taught his followers "an important rule: When people shame you concerning your form of worship or other good things, do not answer them anything, lest you become involved in an argument and are led to pride, which will cause you to forget the blessed Creator. Our sages taught that man's silence leads to humility."

In the midst of the proceedings, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev received a report vividly describing the personal harassments and sufferings his family was compelled to endure. His colleagues decided that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak should read out this letter in the presence of the Maggid, but even as he did so, Rabbi DovBer remained silent. The disciples interpreted their master's silence as an indication that the matter was up to their discretion, and thus decided to act on their own.

They met secretly, and resolved that it was their legal duty to defend and guard the honor of their holy master and to combat the unjustified denunciations. It seemed there was but one thing they could do: to abide by the stipulation in Jewish law to meet an illegitimately proclaimed cherem (ban) with a counter-ban. Their meeting concluded with a quorum of ten men rising to proclaim a counter-anathema against the denunciators of Chassidism.

When the Maggid heard of this action,

he was dismayed and admonished his disciples most severely. Upon their retort that they were no longer able to endure the persecutions and saw no alternative, Rabbi DovBer replied:

"Know that by the action you have taken, you have forfeited your head. However, at the same time, you have gained that henceforth, whenever there will be a conflict between the chassidim and their opponents, the chassidim will prevail."

The Maggid's disciples had achieved a victory—but at a costly price. Within half a year they would lose their head, the crown of Chassidism, Rabbi DovBer, the great Maggid of Mezeritch.

Some two months later, the Maggid lay gravely ill. Many of his disciples hurried to Annapol to be at their master's bedside. On the last Shabbat of his life, the 16th of Kislev, he explained the first verse of that day's Torah reading (Genesis 32:4), "And Jacob sent malachim," to the disciples standing around his bed: "Rashi interprets (that malachim means) 'angels mamash' (real angels). That is, Jacob sent the mamash (the concrete reality) of the angels, but the spirituality of the angels remained with Jacob."

The next day, Sunday, the 17th of Kislev, the Maggid said to his disciple, Rabbi Shneur Zalman that in the last three days before one returns the "deposit" (i.e., the soul entrusted into man's charge), one sees nothing other than the creative word of G-d inherent in every physical thing; that is, one sees that the word of the Creator is the very essence and reality of matter.

That night he instructed Rabbi Schneur Zalman in the procedure for the celebration to be conducted on the Shabbat eve preceding a circumcision, and the procedures for the ceremony the night preceding a circumcision as well as for the day of the circumcision itself. He added: "Chazon Ovadyah—the servant of G-d sees. A son shall be born unto you, and you shall call him by my name; and on the night preceding the circumcision, remember and recall what I told you this night."

The following day, the Maggid told Rabbi Schneur Zalman privately: "Zalman, see to do whatever you can that my Avromenyu remain in my seat. If, Heaven forbid, he should refuse, then let it be Mendele the Litvak."

His son, Rabbi Abraham, recalled other things the Maggid said that day in the presence of himself, Rabbi Yehudah Leib HaCohen and Rabbi Schneur Zalman: "My children, hold together, and then you will overcome everything; you will then progress even further and not regress, Heaven forbid."

Afterwards, Rabbi Zusya also came, and the Maggid asked who entered. Rabbi Zalman answered, "Rabbi Zusya came," and the Maggid motioned with his finger that he should approach. He grasped him with his right hand and said to him as follows: "You, Zusya, you are mine in this world, and over there you will also be next to me, just as the body and soul [are joined]."

He then asked whether Rabbi Mendel of Vitebsk was present, to which Rabbi Schneur Zalman answered that he was not. He sighed deeply and asked whether Rabbi Yehudah Leib HaCohen was there, and Rabbi Zalman answered in the affirmative. The Maggid looked at him and said as follows: "You, too, will be in my compartment, 'for the lips of the Cohen (priest) are to keep da'at—knowledge' (Malachi 2:4), and I am of the realm of da'at."

Thereupon he called out, "Zalmina, Zalmina," and said as follows: "You will stand alone. However, I will see to drag you out of all your troubles, because for you I will truly long."

Then he said as follows to his son: "And you, Avromenyu, you just keep silent and continue to conduct yourself as you have done until now. Listen to Zalminyu, and it will be well with you. Above all, do not afflict yourself, for a small defect in the body causes a large defect in the soul—and your soul is something altogether unique."

He then wished his disciples a good night and went to sleep.

On Tuesday, the third day in the week of the Torah section Vayeshev Yaakov, on the 19th day of Kislev 5533 (1772), Rabbi DovBer, Maggid of Mezerich, Koretz and Rovno, successor to the Baal Shem Tov and leader of the chassidic movement, turned his soul unto his Maker, and his earthly remains were interred in Annapol.

Shortly before his demise, the Maggid had said to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi: "Yud-Tet Kislev (the nineteenth of Kislev) is our yom tov (festival)." (The Maggid seems to allude to the future liberation of Rabbi Schneur Zalman on the 19th of Kislev 5559 (1798), which symbolized the vindication of the chassidic movement, and as such relates implicitly to the Maggid as well.)

For unto the righteous, the day they are able to restore their soul to G-d in purity and sanctity is not a sad departure from one world, but a joyously anticipated homecoming to another. Like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai of old, Rabbi DovBer, too, regarded the day of his passing as a yom tov for himself, and wished that his disciples and followers rejoice with him.

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SOUL COFFEE

A king without a queen, the Zohar says, is neither great nor a king. For it is the woman who empowers the man to conquer.

And it is the man who empowers the woman to nurture.

And then the man will learn from this woman that he, too, can reach within others and provide nurture.

And the woman will learn that through nurture, she can conquer.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

19th of Kislev Greetings and Blessings

On the occasion of Yud-Tes (19th) Kislev, the anniversary of the liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Chassidism, I take this opportunity to send you greetings and good wishes.

This day, as you are surely aware, does not commemorate a personal triumph of a great teacher and leader, for with its founder the entire movement and teachings of Chassidism received a new lease on life.

The Chabad movement experienced birthpangs by far more acute than any movement would normally expect. To the same degree its triumph showed all the more clearly that it was the victory of Truth brought about by Divine Providence.

If in those days, some 150 years ago, the full impact of Chassidism upon Jewish life could not be envisaged by all, it is now quite evident that Chassidism has been a vital necessity for our entire people.

My father-in-law, our late Lubavitcher Rabbi of sainted memory, wrote in one of his latest circulated letters dated 10th of Kislev (the anniversary of the liberation of Rabbi Dov Ber, the son of the founder, who, like his father, was persecuted for his leadership and dissemination of Chabad Chassidism) that Chassidism is not an exclusive philosophy for any particular group, but a way of life for all our people, young and old.

The custom, practiced by many, of observing the anniversary of an important event in their life, has a deeper explanation in our sacred books. It is based on the idea that the same spiritual forces which were operative at the time of the original event reassert themselves at the time of the anniversary. It is therefore an opportune time to benefit from those forces and revelations. In this light we observe Yud-Tes Kislev. And although all of us - and I feel sure that I can include you among us - are still grief-stricken^[1] for our revered Rabbi of sainted memory, we know that the dissemination of the teachings of the founder of Chabad, the hero of the occasion, must not be relaxed. Now, more than ever, we must appreciate our responsibility to spread the light of Chabad far and wide so that it permeates every aspect of Jewish life. Whoever knew my father-in-law of sainted memory, even slightly, can have no doubts that this is his will and testament to us.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

Rebbe Pictures

Question: Many thanks to you and your wife for Friday night dinner. We had a great time. I just had one question. I noticed you have a huge picture of your Rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson, on the wall. I don't mean to be rude, but is this type of reverence for a human being appropriate?

Answer: I do revere the Rebbe, but not because he was superhuman. On the contrary.

Here was a man that received up to one thousand letters a day and answered them all; advised concerned parents of unwell children and singles searching for life partners with the same love and attention as he advised presidents and prime ministers on world affairs; had the vision to set up a web of institutions around the globe in order to rebuild Judaism after the war; promoted values and morals for the non-Jewish world; was as comfortable in the sciences as he was in Torah wisdom, and found G-d in both; healed the sick with his blessings, and answered people's questions before they even asked them; took the responsibility of the world on his shoulders, but had time for every individual.

These are just a sample of his qualities. But above all this, why I revere him was because he was human. For a superhuman to achieve all the above is no big deal. They don't have to work hard to become heroes. But for a human being of flesh and blood, it is nothing short of amazing.

That's why I have a picture of the Rebbe on my wall. It always reminds me of what a human can achieve, and that I can always do more to better the world.

I saw the Rebbe only once. But it is due to his influence that I am today an active and proud Jew. His teachings inspired me to become a rabbi—otherwise, who knows? I might have been a B-grade trapeze artist or a struggling plumber's assistant. The very fact that I am writing these words and you are reading them is thanks to the Rebbe's vision.

From the Rebbe's teachings I have learned what G-d is. From his life I have learnt what humans can be.

A WORD

from the Director

This week on December 19, we will celebrate the 19th of Kislev (known as "Yud Tes Kislev"), the Festival of Redemption of the founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. Imprisoned on false charges of anti-government activity, Rabbi Shneur Zalman was released after 52 days of incarceration and interrogation, in the year 1798. His liberation vindicated Chasidic teachings, and established Chassidus as the primary way to prepare the world for Moshiach.

Lesser publicized is that the Alter Rebbe, as he was called, was subjected to a second confinement two years later, when he was summoned to Petersburg to appear before a government commission. This second imprisonment, which took the form of house arrest, was also the result of slander against the Chasidic movement. Again the Rebbe was found innocent of all charges, and was freed by the decree of Czar Alexander I.

The first public observance of Yud Tes Kislev was held in 1801, when thousands of Chasidim came to celebrate with the Alter Rebbe in Liadi. On that occasion, the Rebbe delivered a Chasidic discourse on the verse in Psalms, "G-d has redeemed my soul in peace." (By Divine Providence, this was the verse the Rebbe had been reading in prison at the exact moment he was informed of his release.) Before delivering the discourse, the Alter Rebbe sang a famous Chasidic melody to the words "You are my G-d and I will praise You; My L-rd, I will exalt You."

Yud Tes Kislev has ever since been celebrated as the Chassidic "New Year," with festive gatherings of family, friends and acquaintances. It is a particularly auspicious day to rededicate ourselves to Torah, deeds of kindness, and prayer.

As the Rebbe wrote in a telegram to Chasidim a few years ago: "May you be inscribed - and may that inscription be sealed - for a good year in the study of Chassidus and in Chasidic ways of conduct."

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

When the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chassidism) remained in Russia after Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk went to Israel, the Rebbe began to spread his teachings over the vastness of Russia, sending rays of the light of Chasidic philosophy to every city and town. At first he had very few Chassidim, and the Chasidic movement was quite limited in scope, but day by day its light was revealed and people came to Liozna to investigate for themselves.

The Volper had shabby clothes and a persistent smell of vodka about him. He was tall and skinny, and had prominent cheekbones, but his most distinguished feature was the sparkle in his eyes. He was known simply as the Volper; nobody knew his first name. The few who did know him also knew that the Volper was a prodigious Torah scholar who used to be a student of the Maggid of Mezritch. He had shared a bench with the great Chasidic luminaries, such as Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, Rabbi Zushe of Anipol and his brother Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, and even with the youngest of the group, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. Together they had absorbed Torah and Chassidic teachings from the great Maggid.

The Volper however, had unique qualities which set him apart from the others. After the Maggid finished speaking, the other students would go over to the Volper to hear him repeat the Maggid's teachings. When he spoke, everything was clear and his audience would be completely overcome.

Nobody knew what led to the Volper's downfall. At some point, he began drinking excessively. He even began to frequent bars. He did not speak about himself. Wherever he went on his wanderings, his mouth would spew forth pearls of Torah and wisdom, even the deepest secrets of Torah. The more he drank, the more the "secret came out," the secrets of Torah. People who did not understand him mocked him.

One day the Volper arrived in Liozna in White Russia, where he went to the local study hall. The Alter Rebbe was there with his Chasidim and outstanding students, and he was saying a deep Chasidic discourse. The Volper sat in a corner, and in a rare moment of seriousness and lucidity, he rested his head on his hands and listened closely to the Rebbe's teachings. Nobody paid him any attention at all.

When the Alter Rebbe had concluded, he left the study hall and went home. The Volper also left the study hall, backpack on his shoulders, to continue his wanderings. Before leaving though, he hiccuped loudly and proclaimed with a peculiar smile, maybe one of pain or longing, "Ah, we all ate from one bowl, but he got all the gedichte (the thick portion of the soup)."

Word got around, until the Alter Rebbe was told what had been said. "That was the Volper," the Rebbe said. "If I knew he was here, I would have tried to get him to stay with us so that he wouldn't wander any more."

The Volper continued his wanderings. The Volper arrived in Vilna, a large city full of Torah scholars. Nobody paid him any attention. He entered a hostel where he got a warm meal. Then he removed a bottle of vodka from his worn satchel and poured himself a big glass. The poor drunkard settled down in his place and went to sleep by the warm oven, while mumbling secrets of Torah. He quoted from works of Kabbalah and concepts from the innermost teachings of Torah, and every so often he burst into drunken laughter.

Reb Yudel stood nearby and listened closely to the drunk. Reb

Yudel was a highly esteemed Torah scholar. He was a close student of the Vilna Gaon, and merited a seat of honor in the study hall. At first he thought his ears were deceiving him, but then his amazement continued to grow. He realized that the drunkard was an outstanding scholar, conversant in all aspects of the Torah.

Reb Yudel stood there and listened until the drunkard let forth a snore and nearly fell asleep. Reb Yudel shook him by the shoulder. "Tell me dear brother," he said in his ear, "where did you get all this from?"

The Volper cocked an eye at him, and Yudel suddenly saw the mysterious sparkle in his eyes. It scared him a bit and he edged away. "Ah, ah... You want to know where I got this from?"

Reb Yudel nodded his head silently. He was too shocked to utter a word.

"N-n-no!" whispered the drunk. "I can't tell you now. But if you want Torah such as this, go to Liozna where you will find peace for your soul."

Reb Yudel reeled backward in dismay. He knew good and well who was in Liozna, for he was one of the greatest opponents of Chassidism and its proponents. Yet the drunkard's words entered his heart, and a fierce battle was waged therein. "If this drunk knows so much, what does the Rebbe himself know?!" he wondered. A few days passed until he resolved to travel to Liozna to learn from the Alter Rebbe. He knew he had a lot to learn.

Like other great scholars, Reb Yudel finally arrived in Liozna, where he became an outstanding Chasid of the Alter Rebbe, and a great scholar in Chasidic teachings. The Rebbe eventually sent him to Liepelei to serve as rabbi of the city and to bring the light of Chassidus to the people living there.

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	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	8:21	9:27
Adelaide	8:08	9:11
Brisbane	6:22	7:20
Darwin	6:50	7:43
Gold Coast	6:21	7:20
Perth	7:01	8:02
Sydney	7:45	8:47
Canberra	7:57	9:01
Launceston	8:24	9:34
Auckland	8:19	9:24
Wellington	8:33	9:43
Hobart	8:28	9:41
Byron Bay	7:22	8:21

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	MINCHA:	8.30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	8.55 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.32 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	8.15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9.27 PM
	WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS:
	MINCHA:	8.30 PM
	MAARIV:	9.15 PM