

LIVING JEWISH

Tell Your Children

The Knock at the Door

A chassid once came to the great Maggid of Mezritch with a question that had long troubled him.

"Rebbe," he said, "I find myself constantly battling unwanted thoughts. They enter my mind without invitation, and no matter how hard I try, I cannot seem to rid myself of them. How can a person truly learn to control his thoughts?"

The Maggid looked at him thoughtfully. Instead of answering, he gave him an unexpected assignment. "I want you to travel to my disciple, Rabbi Zev of Zhitomir," he said. "He will teach you the answer."

Though puzzled, the chassid did not question his Rebbe. If Rabbi Zev held the answer, then to Rabbi Zev he would go.

After a good distance of travel, he finally reached the outskirts of Zhitomir. By then the sun had already set, and a fierce winter storm had descended upon the countryside. Thick snow covered the roads, the wind whipped through the trees with a mournful howl, and the icy air cut through his heavy coat as though it were paper. His boots were soaked, his fingers numb, and every step had become a struggle.

Arriving at the House

Then, through the darkness, he spotted a small house. Warm golden light spilled from its windows onto the snow. Smoke curled gently from the chimney, promising a blazing fire within. As he drew closer, he heard the muffled sound of cheerful voices and the clinking of dishes. His heart lifted. Soon he would be inside, warming himself by the fire after his long and exhausting journey. He climbed the steps and knocked gently on the door. No answer.

Perhaps no one had heard him over the lively conversation. He waited a moment and knocked again, this time more firmly. Still nothing.

He could clearly hear people inside. Surely someone would come. He knocked a third time, louder than before, the sound echoing through the quiet winter night. Again, no response.



Confused, he walked around the side of the house and peered through one of the windows. Inside, he could see Rabbi Zev sitting with his family around the dinner table. They were eating, talking, and smiling together. The room glowed with warmth.

Certain they simply hadn't heard the knocking at the door. He rapped firmly on the window. No one looked up. He knocked again. Nothing.

It was impossible. They had to know he was there. The chassid stood in the snow, bewildered and hurt. Why would they ignore a weary traveler on such a bitter night?

The Long Night

With nowhere else to go, he returned to the front porch, wrapped his coat tightly around himself, and sat on the frozen doorstep.

Hour after hour passed as the wind howled around him and the cold crept deeper into his bones. He barely slept, wondering why his Rebbe had sent him to a man who would leave a fellow Jew outside in such cruel conditions.

At last, dawn broke. The door swung open. Rabbi Zev stood there with a broad smile. "Welcome!" he said warmly.

"Please come inside."

The chassid was grateful for the invitation to enter the warm home but was utterly confused.

"Rebbe," he asked respectfully, "I don't understand. Last night I knocked again and again. I even knocked on the window. I know you heard me. Why didn't you let me in?"

Rabbi Zev looked at him calmly. "Because," he replied simply, "I did not want to."

Our Choice

In that instant, the chassid understood why the Maggid had sent him to Rabbi Zev.

The battle is not to stop every thought from knocking. The battle is fought at the door. Every person possesses the G-d given ability to choose which thoughts are welcomed into the home of the mind—and which are left standing outside.

Thoughts are always knocking. Some deserve to be welcomed. Others do not. We cannot always prevent a thought from arriving at the door of our mind, but we can decide whether to invite it inside and give it a place to stay.

Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:49	8:01
Tel Aviv	7:05	8:04
Haifa	6:56	8:04
Beer Sheva	7:05	8:02
New York	7:37	8:37



Judgement and its Application

This week's Torah reading, Shoftim, states, "appoint judges and officers at all your gates." Placing judges at the gates reflects a desire to have every element of the city's functioning conform to Torah law. The verse also serves as a lesson that each person must act as a judge and an officer in his own home, structuring it according to the Torah's standards.

This concept is further amplified by an interpretation of "your gates" as referring to the body's sensory organs: the eyes, ears, skin, nose and mouth. These serve as the "gates" through which we take in information from the environment. We are told to "appoint judges" at these gates, so even our physical perception will be permeated by the guidance of the Torah.

The Need for Enforcement

Moreover, the Torah uses the singular Hebrew form of the word "your gates," implying that these efforts are incumbent upon everyone. Every person is "a city in microcosm," and should "appoint judges and officers" to control his interactions with the world at large.

The judges within our communities and similarly, the judgmental aspects of our own personalities cannot only look

inwards. On the contrary, our Sages state that a judge must "gird his loins with bands of steel, lift his robes above his knees, and traverse from city to city... to teach the Jewish people."

A judge's directives are from the Torah. Yet, since the Torah is above intellect, people may have difficulty relating to the directives. Even when they acknowledge the truth of these directives, there may be a gap between such recognition and their own understanding. And this gap may keep such directives from being applied.

Advisors

There are two ways to resolve this difficulty. The first is mentioned in the verse cited: the appointment of enforcement officers who will compel others to carry out the judges' rulings. Yet, although enforced compliance ensures just conduct, the person compelled to observe remains unrefined. He has been forced to conform, but that conformity is external.

We see a more comprehensive approach from a verse from Isaiah describing the Era of the Redemption: "And I will return your judges as in former times, and your advisers as at the beginning."

An adviser does not issue mandates. Instead, he offers constructive suggestions. When "advisers" thus share and

explain rulings delivered by the judges, the dictates of the Torah change not only a person's conduct, but also his character.

Judges and Prophets

The difference between these two kinds of observance can be illustrated by comparing the function of a judge with that of a prophet. Sages and judges teach the dictates of Torah law. Prophets convey G-d's word on a level more closely related to people's experience, inspiring them to make G-dliness part of their lives.

These concepts are also relevant now. As a foretaste of the prophecy: "And I will return your judges as in former times, and your advisers as at the beginning," before Moshiach's coming, we have been granted judges and prophets to provide us with direction and guidance. Often these qualities have been personified in single individuals, as manifest in the leaders of Chabad until the present age.

These leaders have, like judges, given us directives regarding the present time and, like advisers, have provided us with the insight to anticipate the Redemption, and prepare an environment in which this spirit can spread through the world.

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe from In the Garden of Torah; reprinted with permission from Sichos in English.

From Our Sages

Teshuvah and Good Deeds

There are two approaches to healing a physical illness:

1. To heal the sick and weakened organ.
2. To strengthen the healthy organs so that they can overcome the weakness of the diseased organ and restore it.

Similarly, there are two paths to spiritual healing: teshuvah and good deeds.

(Hayom Yom)

Open a Hole Like the Eye of a Needle

"Open for Me, My sister..." (Song of Songs 5:2)

Rabbi Yasa said: The Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel: "My children, open for Me an opening of teshuvah the size of the eye of a needle, and I will open for you an entrance wide enough for wagons and carriages to pass through."

(Shir HaShirim Rabbah)

Teshuvah Brings Redemption

Rabbi Yonatan said: "Great is teshuvah, for it brings redemption, as it is written:

'And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who repent of transgression in Jacob, says the L-rd.'" (Isaiah 59:20)

(Yoma 86a)

Past, Present, and Future

Teshuvah consists of correcting and putting one's present in order, regretting the past, and making good resolutions for the future.

The key, however, is the present. When the present is properly ordered, one can fill what was lacking or wrong in the past and build fences and safeguards for the future.

(the Rebbe)

Between a Mitzvah and a Sin

When the youngest son of Rabbi Yissachar Dov of Belz was old enough, the Rebbe began training him to serve G-d with self-sacrifice.

One winter day, he took his son with him to immerse in the river. The water was very cold. As the boy stepped into the water, he cried out,

"Oy! Oy!"

After immersing, he wrapped himself in a towel. As warmth slowly returned to his body, he murmured with pleasure,

"Ahh... Ahh..."

The tzaddik then said to him:

"Come and see the difference between a mitzvah and a transgression. A mitzvah begins with 'Oy! Oy!' but ends with 'Ahh... Ahh...' A transgression, however, begins with 'Ahh... Ahh...' but ends with 'Oy! Oy!'"

**This issue of Living Jewish is dedicated in honor of the 81st birthday of Menashe Ben Ani-
from his wife, children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.**

Hochstead, Edreyi, Ben Lapid and Barkman families.

Chassidus Page



The Path to True Teshuvah

Among Chabad chassidim, it is customary during the month of Elul to study the book *Derech Chaim*, authored by the Mitteler Rebbe, the second Rebbe of Chabad. This is a book that awakens one to teshuvah (returning to Hashem), in which the concept of true teshuvah is explained in detail, along with how to act so that teshuvah impacts one's life throughout the year.

During the month of Elul and the Days of Awe, every Jew has thoughts of repentance and sincerely wishes to improve their ways. However, with time, very often the faults will return as if nothing happened. Why isn't there a more lasting affect?

The Mitteler Rebbe explains that the teshuvah treated only the external manifestations of the "illness" and not its essence and root. Most of one's energy was invested in the negative phenomena themselves, but very little was directed toward treating their cause and inner source.

Prikat Ol

This is compared to a ruined and broken house, where shady characters find shelter and leave all kinds of garbage. The owner may come from time to time to chase out the uninvited guests and clean the accumulated trash, but immediately the next day the troublemakers return. As long as the house remains open and broken to every wind, it will attract every fly and lowlife. Only after the owner closes all the openings and locks the gates will he no longer need to remove trash, because it will no longer enter at all.

Similarly, in the soul, there are harmful forces and "garbage" that penetrate it — these are our negative thoughts, speech, and deeds for which we are called to do teshuvah. But the main cause that makes

the soul like a ruin open to every wind, is "prikat ol" (throwing off the yoke of Heaven) and lightheartedness. When there is no "kabbalat ol" (acceptance of the yoke of Heaven), no guarding of all that enters and exits the gates of the soul — what wonder that all harmful influences penetrate inside.

First and Foremost

True teshuvah is first and foremost the removal of prikat ol. And when speaking of prikat ol, it is not necessarily total removal of the yoke of Heaven. Prikat ol can be found even in a Torah-observant Jew who prays three times a day, sets fixed times for Torah study, and is meticulous in mitzvot — and yet has no kabbalat ol. He looks where he should not, listens to improper things, all for one reason — prikat ol and lightheartedness. He does not feel the yoke; he lacks the sense that every matter must be scrutinized and examined.

Kabbalat ol means placing gates at the entrances of the soul. Not everything that wants enters and exits freely. There are permitted and forbidden things. The soul is not abandoned property. Every matter must stand the test of the mind and pass through the supervision of the heart. Only if it is good and proper will it enter inside.

The first condition for true teshuvah is acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. A Jew who carries the yoke, always feels the sovereignty of G-d. He does not allow lightheartedness to take control over him. After all, he has a Master; he is G-d's servant! Therefore he controls all his actions and examines every word and thought. This is true teshuvah, which uproots the root of evil, and only afterwards can one deal with correcting the past.

Haven't Prepared the Leeches...

When the Mitteler Rebbe (the second Chabad Rebbe) was five years old, he studied under Reb Ber the melamed (teacher), in the home of Reb Avraham the doctor. Once he overheard Reb Avraham bemoaning, "We are already far into Elul, but I haven't yet prepared the leeches!" Leeches were used for healing and were only out in the warm summer months.

When the Mitteler Rebbe came home after school, he used to spend time in the company of the chassidim who were in the room next to the Alter Rebbe's room.

One day he saw them sitting around and talking, when they suddenly began to laugh. Hearing them, the young boy reprimanded them, "we are deep into Elul, you haven't yet prepared the leeches, yet you sit here laughing?!"

And he left the room.

Crying and Dancing

They immediately assumed that this was a teaching he had heard from his father, the Alter Rebbe, and began to think deeply into its meaning.

They concluded that just as leeches are used to draw out a patient's diseased or overheated blood, during the month of Elul one should do away with one's negative desires in preparation for Rosh HaShana.

When word of their discussion reached the Alter Rebbe, he said, "such is the way of the Baal Shem Tov — to learn a lesson in G-dly service from every physical thing that one sees or hears. Whoever follows this path and uses all physical things for G-dly service, will instill in himself and in his descendants a spark of inspiration in their service of Hashem."

Chassidim recall: That Rosh HaShana, the floor was wet with tears from the impact of the Mitteler Rebbe's words, and on Simchat Torah, the shoes of the chassidim were worn out and torn by the exuberant dancing inspired by the Alter Rebbe's promise.

reprinted from The Weekly Farbrengen by Merkaz Anash, on-line at TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com

Moshiach Now



Everyone Must Do Teshuvah

One of the unique powers of a person is the ability to do teshuvah—to make a leap that is incomparably higher than the framework he has been living in until now. No matter how good and admirable his life has been up to this point, he always possesses the ability to rise to a level so much higher that, in comparison, his previous state is considered a "chet" (sin)—a deficiency, something that fell short.

Therefore, according to the teachings of Chassidus, everyone must do teshuvah. It is through this return and spiritual ascent that we bring about the Redemption.



Order Living Jewish — Simply scan the QR code to read online.
Scroll down to order.

Order printed copies for distribution, available for pickup at your local Chabad House (in Israel) or a digital subscription (a PDF sent to your email).

To dedicate an issue of
Living Jewish contact:
livingjewishweekly@gmail.com

Human Interest

9th Children's Torah

In an inspiring ceremony, the completion and dedication of the ninth *Children's Sefer Torah* took place, marking the culmination of a three-year campaign during which children from across the globe were registered in this unique Torah scroll.

The project, dedicated entirely to Jewish children, was initiated by the Rebbe in 1981 (5741) with the goal of uniting Jewish children and serving as a source of protection and blessing for the Jewish people. As is customary, the Torah was dedicated on the 20th of Menachem Av, the *yahrzeit* of the saintly Kabbalist Rabbi Levi Yitzchak



Schneerson, the Rebbe's father.

The writing of the letters brought together 304,805 children from around the world, registered through thousands of the Rebbe's emissaries who coordinated the campaign in their communities. Distinguished Torah leaders, Chassidic Rebbes, Heads of Yeshivas and communal activists—many of whom had devoted themselves to registering children and organizing the event—were honored with writing the final letters.

Tens of thousands of Jews traveled by organized buses, private vehicles, and public transportation from throughout the country, representing many communities and backgrounds. Following the completion of the *hakafot* and dancing at the Kotel, the new *Sefer Torah* was escorted with great honor to the Tzemach Tzedek Synagogue, where it now stands with the eight Children's Torahs that preceded it.

Cooking Tip of the Week

Milk Substitute: Plant-based milk is a great substitute for dairy in pareve or vegan recipes, but not all varieties perform the same. Barista-style plant milks are usually thicker and produce a creamier, richer result. If your plant milk is too thin, you can thicken it by whisking in a little cornstarch before using it.

Alizah Hochstead
alizahh@hotmail.com

Halacha Corner – The Mitzvah of Teshuvah

Although widely translated as repentance, *teshuvah* is more correctly translated as returning—returning to Hashem. *Teshuvah* encompasses numerous steps: abandoning the sin, regretting one's past actions, making a resolution for the future, and *viduy* (verbally confessing one's sins to Hashem).

In case one wronged another person, asking for forgiveness is required as well. If applicable, one must make right the misdeed they committed. If one stole, for example, they are not forgiven unless they return the stolen object. Whereas all of the above are components of *teshuvah*, and they are important in terms of achieving complete atonement, they are not part of the actual *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*. Fasting and self-imposed afflictions may also be of help, but neither is a component of doing *teshuvah*. The core principal of *teshuvah* is returning to Hashem. This is achieved through abandoning the negative behavior and resolving not to sin again.

In *Sefer HaTanya*, the Alter Rebbe puts forth a novel concept: it is not sufficient to resolve not to repeat a particular sin, but one is also required to resolve not to rebel against Hashem's Kingship again, and to keep all of Hashem's *mitzvot* in the future.

Rav Yosef Yeshaya Braun, member of the Badatz of Crown Heights; 1 Minute Halacha #381, reprinted from crownheightsconnect.com

Farbrengen



Question: I have noticed that you speak a lot about giving as a way to create a better marriage. However, I find that I give a lot to my wife, but she doesn't give me much in return. What would you say about my case?

Answer: That can be a discouraging place to be. When we invest in our marriage and feel our efforts are not returned, it is natural to feel hurt and wonder whether giving works.

In many marriages, genuine giving does inspire a similar response over time. While there are certainly exceptions, it can be worthwhile to reflect on a few possibilities why it may not be having the usual results.

The Assumption Trap: We give what we think our spouse wants. True giving requires listening to our spouse's desires. Our intentions may be good, but if our spouse does not feel cared for, they may not respond as we hope.

The Transactional Trap: Our giving can become transactional. We may not say it, but deep down we expect our kindness will be repaid. Genuine giving, however, has a unique power. It creates emotional closeness, and that closeness often awakens in the other spouse a genuine desire to give in return. When our focus shifts to what we are not receiving, we unintentionally weaken the very process that encourages reciprocity.

The Foundation: The foundation of marriage is putting the marriage first. Ironically, when both spouses are focused on strengthening the marriage rather than simply getting their own needs met, both usually end up more fulfilled.

Giving vs. Pleasing: Giving is motivated by a sincere desire to benefit our spouse. Pleasing is often motivated by a need for approval. Although they can look similar, giving creates closeness; pleasing creates distance.

Yet, giving does not mean being a doormat. Healthy marriages include healthy boundaries. Even expressing a need or setting a limit can be an act of giving. A true giver asks, "how can I express this boundary in a way that strengthens our connection?"

If any of these ideas resonate with you, consider making one small adjustment. Often, when one spouse gives from a genuine place, it encourages the other spouse to do the same.

Aharon Schmidt, relationship and personal coaching: www.aharonschmidt.com

***Marriage seminar for men beginning the 5th of Elul (August 18th). Contact aharonschmidt@gmail.com to reserve your place.**



Real service, in real English - That's why Anglos in Israel choose TCS Telecom!



Call us for help: **02-655-0332** or
From US: **1-866-929-5012**

