

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth
Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל Hakhel

from
Sichos In English

Applying Hakhel

This year is a year of Hakhel, associated with joy and rejoicing. Hakhel occurred at the time of Sukkos, the season of our rejoicing, when men, women and even infants came to the Bais Hamikdosh. There they heard the king read from the Torah, all of which contributed to the joy of the occasion.

In our times as well, we must joyously celebrate Hakhel, albeit in the spiritual sense and not in the physical Bais Hamikdosh. Yet the world unheedingly slumbers on! So we will try a tested and proven way to reverse the situation—that in all one's actions one must “serve G d with joy,” both in matters of Torah and Mitzvos and also in mundane matters such as eating, drinking and sleeping.

Talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbos Parshas Noach, 5741

סיפור חסידי Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber
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Ready Target

His hand will be in everything, and everyone's hand will be at him... (Lech Lecha 16:12)

A certain chassid, a scholarly and knowledgeable man, once complained to Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, the Tzemach Tzedek:

“Rebbe, the entire ‘bais hamidrash’ (study hall) steps on me! They never accept what I say. In fact, they practically always do the opposite of what I advise!”

Said the Rebbe: “You spread yourself about the entire bais hamidrash- wherever one is to step, one cannot but step upon you...”

Living With The Times

In 1941, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch related an experience of over 50 years earlier, when he was a child of eleven:

It was early in the morning of the Shabbos in which the Torah portion of Lech-Lecha is read, before the morning prayers, when I entered my father's room. I found him sitting at his table in very high spirits, reviewing the Torah reading of the week. Tears were streaming from his eyes. I was very confused, for I was unable to understand how the two come together—an elated mood and tears—but I didn't dare ask.

That Shabbos, as every Shabbos, father prayed till late. As was his custom during winter Shabosos,

he made kiddush after praying and then went to pray mincha. After mincha, shortly before sunset, he sat down to the Shabbos meal.

After Shabbos, father would test me on what I had studied during the week and on the mishnayos¹ I had reviewed by heart. If he was satisfied, he would present me with a gift: either a story, whose moral he would point out and explain, or a manuscript of a ma'amer (discourse of chassidic teaching). This was the arrangement in winter of 1890-1.

The same took place the evening following that Shabbos Lech-Lecha: Father tested me and then gave me the discourse 'Ner Chanukah 5643' as a gift. I very much wanted to know why father had been crying, and yet in such an elevated mood, while reviewing the Torah portion that morning. I stood there in confusion, unable to decide whether I should ask or not.

Father noticed my confusion said to me: "Why do you stand there like that? If you wish to say something, say it..." I decided to ask.

Father answered me:

"Those were tears of joy."

He explained: "Once, in the early years of his leadership, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi told his chassidim: 'One must live with the times.'

"The younger chassidim asked the older ones what the Rebbe's statement meant. The elders discussed the matter between themselves. (Years later, Rabbi Schneur Zalman's son and successor, Rabbi DovBer, was to elaborate on this saying in his unique style of 'binah'—a broad, comprehensive treatment of his father's nuggets of wisdom. But when Rabbi Schneur Zalman first said these words, even the great chassidim struggled to understand their meaning.) Finally, Rabbi Schneur Zalman's brother, our great-uncle Rabbi Yehudah Leib, explained what the Rebbe meant.

"One must live with the times' means that every day one should 'live with' and experience in one's own life the Torah portion of the week and the specific section of the week's portion which is connected to that day.²

"The Rebbe's chassidim, young and old, would study the daily section of the Chumash³ with Rashi's commentary. The Rebbe was telling them: One must live with the times. One must not only learn the daily portion, but actually experience it in one's own life.

"The portion of Breishis," continued my father, "is a happy portion. G-d is creating universes and creatures and is satisfied 'that it is good.'⁴ However, the ending, which describes the corruption of humanity and G-d's 'regret' at its creation, is not so pleasant. Still in all, it is generally a happy Torah portion and in all Jewish communities there is joy and delight—we have begun the Torah anew. With the next week's reading, Noach, comes the flood. It is a depressing week, but with a happy ending—Abraham our father is born.

"But the truly joyous week" father concluded, explaining his mood that morning "is Lech-Lecha. Every day of the week we live our lives together with Abraham.

"Together with Abraham, the first to sacrifice himself to bring the message of G-dliness to the world. Together with Abraham, who bequeathed his self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvos as an inheritance to each and every Jew."

1. The *Mishnah* is a summary of Torah law, compiled in the 4th century by Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi, which forms the crux of the Talmud. As a child, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok memorized hundreds of chapters of mishnah as part of the daily schedule and curriculum set down by his father.

2. Each weekly portion is subdivided into seven sections, one for each of the seven individuals who are called to the Torah in the course of the weekly public reading in the synagogue on Shabbos. From the days of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, it has been the custom among Chabad Chassidim to study one of these sub-sections each day of the week.

3. The Five Books of Moses.

4. Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31.

The Entire Torah In Every Mitzvah

Our forefather Avraham was given only one commandment—circumcision,—and the collective energy of the entire Torah was contracted into that one Mitzvah. Later, when the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai, that energy spread to the 613 branches of the Torah, manifesting as 613 individual commandments.

[Similarly, the collective energy of the Torah's negative prohibitions is contracted into the lone injunction against idol worship, which is why idol worship is considered akin to violating the entire Torah. At Sinai, that energy spread to the branches that now comprise the Torah's 365 negative prohibitions.]

On a deeper level, the Torah in its primordial state transcends time and exists in a state of simple oneness, without component branches. Therefore, every component Mitzvah of the Torah as we now know it contains not only the entire Torah but also

all of the worlds, in line with the verse (Tehillim 119:18): “Uncover my eyes and I shall look at hidden things from Your Torah.”

With this introduction, we can now understand the Talmudic claim (Tractate Yoma 28b) that our forefather Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah before it was received at Sinai. Since the lone Mitzvah of circumcision then contained the contracted energy of the entire Torah, Avraham derived an understanding of each branch of the Torah from fulfilling his one Mitzvah.

This also explains why G-d refers to Himself as “Sha-Dai” when He approaches Avraham about circumcision (Lech-Lecha 17:1). This divine name is associated with G-d's ability to contract expansive energies—including His ability to contract the Torah's energy into that one Mitzvah.

Par. 21 & 200

Lech Lecha, Go, and Arrive At Redemption

“Go from your land, your birthplace, and your father's house to the land that I will show you” (Lech Lecha 12:1).

Avraham's journey was for the sake of receiving the Holy Land. It also served as a spiritual preparation for the receiving of the Torah as explained in Chassidus. The command *lech lecha* applies equally today, for in the Era of Redemption we will finally receive the entire land promised to Avraham and we will also receive the “new Torah that

will issue from Me,” the superior teachings of the Redemption. Our *lech lecha* involves leaving our accomplishments and manner of divine service and launching a far superior level of service, elevating not only our emotions but also our minds.

The Rebbe

Four Stages of Revealing G-d In The World

The Giving of the Torah dissolved the boundary between heaven and earth, enabling the purpose of Creation—the transformation of the physi-

cal world into a home for G-d—to play out. All of history prior to the Giving of the Torah served as a preparation for that pivotal event. More specifi-

cally, the first three *parshiyos* (Torah portions) map out three movements in history that prepared the world for the unification that would begin to take place at Sinai.

The events of *parshas Bereishis* describe a world that reflects the perfection of its Creator. The *parshah* begins with G-d creating the world in accordance with His desire, and it ends with introducing Noah who perfectly follows G-d's will. This is the "heavenly" dimension of Creation, the potential for spirituality that G-d imbued within the world.

Parshas Noach describes the world that gains its own capacity for change. The focus shifts from the world as G-d created it, to the world as we make it. Noah makes the effort to influence his contemporaries to return to G-d. The floodwaters purify the earth itself. Noah's sacrifices and Divine service elicit G-d's promise to never destroy the world again.

However, this focus on the earth itself is not out of concern for the wellbeing of the earth and its inhabitants. Noah did not succeed in transforming the people because he reached out to them out of a

sense of obligation to G-d, not because he truly desired or believed in their capacity for change. So the second *parshah* emphasizes the earthly experience, but it is not an authentic attempt to unify heaven and earth.

Lech Lecha introduces Avraham who begins the attempt to truly connect the lowest elements of creation with G-d. He prays for the sinners of Sodom.

And yet, Avraham's prayer on behalf of Sodom was that they should be saved in the merit of the righteous. Because even Avraham could not find a redeeming spark of G-dliness in the sinners themselves.

Only after the Giving of the Torah, when the divide between heaven and earth was truly breached, could G-dliness be introduced into the lowest part of the world. And thus Moshe prayed for the sinners of the Golden Calf without recourse to the righteous. Because even in the lowest of the earth, in the brazen denial of G-d, he saw Heaven, the potential for G-dliness.

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מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

Book	Section
Chumash – Rashi*	Lech Lecha, 7th Aliyah
Tehillim*	Chapters 60 – 65
Tanya*	Igeres Hakodesh Chapter 27. עמ' 290-291. עד עמ' קמו-נס"ו.
Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos*	Negative Mitzvah #131
Rambam – One Chapter*	Sefer Kinyan – Hilchos Hilchos Shluchin v'Shutafin, Chapter 7
Rambam – Three Chapters**	Sefer Avoda – Hilchos Pesulei HaMukdashin Chapters 8 – 10

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